DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 376 511 CS 214 645

TITLE	A Sampler of English-Language Arts Assessment. High School. Preliminary Edition. California Learning Assessment System (CLAS).
INSTITUTION	California State Dept. of Education, Sacramento.
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-8011-1121-8
PUB DATE	Jan 94
NOTE	244p.; For elementary "sampler," see CS 214 646.
AVAILABLE FROM	Publications Sales, California Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802-0271 ($9).
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Evaluation Methods; High Schools; High School Students; *Language Arts; Program Descriptions; *Reading Achievement; Reading Tests; *Student Evaluation; Student Writing Models; Writing Assignments; *Writing Evaluation; Writing Tests
IDENTIFIERS	*California; Writing Prompts

ABSTRACT

This sampler discusses California's English-language arts assessment program and presents examples of high school reading assessments, writing assessments, and writing prompts. The first section of the sampler takes an integrated look at Year One of the California Learning Assessment System (CLAS). The second section presents the scoring guide for reading, eight student responses to a sample high school reading prompt, and commentary on each student response using the criteria in the scoring guide. The third section of the sampler offers scoring guides and six sample student papers for each of the four types of writing assessed in the spring 1993 assessment: autobiographical incident; interpretation; reflective essay; and speculation about causes and effects. The fourth section presents a writing prompt: a short story with directions for students to write about their reading; guidelines for students on working in small groups to discuss the story; and two writing assignments based on the short story. (RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 376 511

CLAS

California Learning
Assessment System

A Sampler of
English-Language Arts Assessment

High School

CS214645

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL IN OTHER THAN PAPER COPY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

T. Smith

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Preliminary Edition
January 1994

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A Sampler of

English-Language Arts Assessment

High School

A Sampler of English-Language Arts Assessments – High School was developed by the California Learning Assessment System's English-Language Arts Development Team (see the acknowledgments for the membership of the team and others who made significant contributions to the document).

© 1994 by the California Department of Education

Inquiries regarding this document should be directed to the California Learning Assessment System, California Department of Education, 721 Capital Mall, Sacramento, CA 95814, telephone (916) 657-3011.

Copies of this publication are available for $9 each, plus applicable sales tax for California residents, from Publications Sales, California Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802-0271.

ISBN 0-8011-1121-8

Printed by The Psychological Corporation.

Acknowledgments

CLAS English-Language Arts Development Team

Joanne Arellanes, Cambridge Heights Elementary School, San Juan Unified School District
Joyce Ashby, Turlock Junior High School, Turlock Joint Elementary School District
Sonja Bedford, Santa Rosa High School, City of Santa Rosa High School District
Joan Brown, Alameda High School, Alameda City Unified School District
Rosemary Cabe, Lompoc Valley Middle School, Lompoc Unified School District
Lynda Chittenden, Park Elementary School, Mill Valley Elementary School District
Linda Chrabas, La Loma Junior High School, Modesto City Elementary School District
Lois Clark, Mission Middle School, Jurupa Unified School District
Sandra Crepps, Anderson Elementary, Dixon Unified School District
Diego Davalos, Chula Vista Senior High, Sweetwater Union High School District
Yvonne Divans-Hutchinson, Markham Intermediate School, Los Angeles Unified School District
Harriet Donaldson, Conley Elementary School, Taft City Elementary School District
Martha Dudley, Roosevelt Junior High School, Selma Unified School District
Johnetta Fleming, Franklin Middle School, Long Beach Unified School District
Rowena Hacker, Trabuco Hills High School, Saddleback Valley Unified School District
Sylvia Jones, Redwood High School, Tamalpais Union High School District
Mercedes McMurray, Seaside Elementary School, Torrance Unified School District
Cecil Morris, Roseville High School, Roseville Joint Union High School District
Becky Orona, Washington Elementary School, Montebello Unified School District
Cecelia Osborn, Long Beach Unified School District
Teresa Pitta, John Muir Elementary School, Merced City Elementary School District
Nancy Preston, Casimir Middle School, Torrance Unified School District
Elizabeth Sawyer, Belmont Senior High, Los Angeles Unified School District
Kelly Smith, Salinas High School, Salinas Union High School District
Edie Sonnenburg, Buena Vista High School, Corona-Norco Unified District
Marolyn Stewart Chaparral Middle School, Moorpark Unified School District
Bob Thornburg, Bishop Union Elementary School District
Phyllis Turner, James Monroe Elementary School, Santa Rosa Elementary School District
Peggy Watterson, Emerson Junior High School, Davis Joint Unified School District
Darby Williams, James McKee Elementary School, Elk Grove Unified School District

Consultants/Advisors

Sheridan Blau, California Writing Project, University of California, Santa Barbara
Fran Claggett, Forestville
Mel Grubb, California Literature Project, Los Angeles County Office of Education

Sacramento County Office of Education

Sherry Arnold, Senior Staff Analyst
Linda Murai, Program Manager, Prevention and Student Services Center
Julia Stanfill, Stanfill Associates

Department of Education Staff

Juanita Jorgenson, Analyst
Barbara Weiss, Consultant
Jill Wilson, Consultant

CAP/CLAS English-Language Arts Reserve Team

Bill Americh, Lompoc Senior High School, Lompoc Unified School District
Karen Barr, Alpine Union School District
Diane Berger, California State University, Dominguez Hills
Jan Brink, Northern Humboldt Union High School District
Carol Brown, Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District
Sherryl Broyles, Los Angeles Unified School District
Mary Carden, Santa Ana Unified School District
Loyal Carlon, San Diego City Unified School District
Mildred Cunningham, Los Angeles Unified School District
Juanita Darsa, Inglewood Unified School District
Kent Gill, Camp Sherman, Oregon
Gilbert Gonzales, San Diego City Unified School District
Stephanie Graham, Los Angeles County Office of Education
Sam Hatch, Lodi Unified School District
Jack Hobbs, Ventura Unified School District
DeWitt Johnson, Ygnacio Valley High School, Mt. Diablo Unified School District
Alice Kawazoe, Oakland Unified School District
Kimi Kinoshita, Shasta Meadows Elementary School, Enterprise Elementary School District
June Kizu, Los Angeles Unified School District
Joe Lawrence, San Juan Unified School District
Patsy Lockhart, New Haven Unified School District
Helen Lodge, California State University, Northridge (Retired)
Judith Machado, Tulare Unified School District (Deceased)
Luis Martinez, Montebello Unified School District
Don Mayfield, San Diego County Office of Education
Joan McCarten, San Jose Unified School District
Barbara McCullough, Sylvan Union Elementary School District
Barbara Miller-Souviney, Cajon Valley Union Elementary School District
Marie Neer, Modoc Unified School District
Katherine Paull, Los Angeles Unified School District
Claire Pelton, San Jose Unified School District
Carol Penara, Richmond Unified School District
Mary-Anna Rae, Torrance Unified School District
Marilyn Renger, Ventura Unified School District
Sandy Rogers, Long Beach Unified School District
Bill Saunders, University of California at Los Angeles
Gail Siegel, Ross Elementary School District
Julie Simpson, Fullerton Union High School District
Tei Ann Sugahara, Chualar Union Elementary School District
Carol Tateishi, Bay Area Writing Project
Sue Thomas, Elk Grove Unified School District
Carol Toomer, Hueneme Elementary School District
Terry Underwood, Rutter Middle School, Elk Grove Unified School District
Fred Vogt, Kern High School District
George Wallach, Fremont Unified School District
Marilyn Whirry, Mira Costa High School, South Bay Union High School District
Linda Wiezorek, Los Berros Elementary School, Lompoc Unified School District
Don Windsor, Yucaipa-Calimesa Joint Unified School District
Josephine Zarro, Los Angeles Unified School District

Contents

Acknowledgments iii

I. California Learning Assessment System, English-Language Arts, Year One: 1993 .... I-1
  English-Language Arts Framework as the Foundation I-1
  Aligning the CLAS Assessment with the English-Language Arts Framework. I-2
  CLAS Two-Part System – On-Demand and Portfolio I-2
  Definition of Reading and the Reading Assessment I-3
  The On-demand Reading Assessment I-4
  Collaborative Group Work in the On-demand Assessment I-5
  The Writing Assessment I-5

II. The 1993 Reading Assessment, Focus on Literature II-1
  Scoring Guide for the California Reading Assessment II-3
  Reading Performances II-5
  Student Responses to the Reading Assessment II-11
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6-Paper 1 .... II-13
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6-Paper 2 .... II-27
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5-Paper 1 .... II-43
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5-Paper 2 .... II-57
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 .... II-73
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 .... II-87
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2 .... II-101
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1 .... II-115

III. High School Writing Assessment III-1
  Autobiographical Incident III-3
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 .... III-4
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 .... III-9
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 .... III-13
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 .... III-16
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2 .... III-18
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1 .... III-20
  Interpretation III-23
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 .... III-24
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 .... III-28
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 .... III-32
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 .... III-36
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2 .... III-38
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1 .... III-39

Reflective Essay III-43
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 .... III-44
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 .... III-50
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 .... III-54
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 .... III-57
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2 .... III-60
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1 .... III-63
  Speculation About Causes and Effects III-65
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 .... III-66
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 .... III-70
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 .... III-74
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 .... III-77
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2 .... III-80
    Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1 .... III-81

IV. Sample High School Prompt IV-1

I. California Learning Assessment System

English-Language Arts

Year One: 1993

English-Language Arts Framework as the Foundation

In 1986 and again in 1993, the State Board of Education adopted the *English-Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*. This document identifies the overarching goals of the English-language arts curriculum:

- *To prepare all students to function as informed and effective citizens in our democratic society.* Language permits people to gain access to the knowledge that makes us culturally literate, and one of the most important ingredients in becoming culturally literate is familiarity with significant works of literature in which the great themes, events, and ideals of the culture have been recorded.

- *To prepare all students to function effectively in the world of work.* In this age of technology, full participation in the work force requires effective language use. Effective language use is at the very core of lifelong learning strategies that will permit people to become versatile and to adapt to jobs in the twenty-first century, which will require sophisticated technical, scientific, and managerial skills.

- *To prepare all students to realize personal fulfillment.* Effective language use also permits people to develop a full sense of themselves as individuals. Through the reading of Anne Frank's diary or the musings of a contemporary author, individuals find answers to their questions and experience a connection with the past and present. By being exposed to the greatest and most powerful literary works, people are given effective models for speaking and writing that enable them to express themselves as individuals within a culture.

English-Language Arts Framework, pages 1-2

Authors of the framework and subsequent model curriculum guides and standards envisioned for California a literature-based English-language arts program that actively engaged students in reading, writing, and reflecting on a wide range of significant literary works and human experiences. At the heart of the framework has been a paradigm shift that replaced "gaining knowledge" with "constructing meaning" as the primary goal to be achieved. Educators at all grade levels have long recognized that students use language actively, interactively, strategically, and fluently as they construct and communicate meaning. Students can grow in their ability to use language as they explore the universe of discourse through their reading, writing, and thinking.

The *English-Language Arts Framework*, along with the state model curriculum standards and guides, describe English-language arts programs that encourage students to read widely and in depth, write often in many formats, study important writings from many disciplines, and relate these studies to their own lives in meaningful ways. Today in California English-language arts classes, students are expected to be active participants in their learning as they try to make sense of the concepts, issues, or attitudes related to a piece of literature. Further, students are urged to think critically as they satisfy interests, clarify issues, solve problems, generate new ideas, or make decisions in response to their readings.

Aligning the CLAS Assessment with the *English-Language Arts Framework*

Where once a single correct answer to a generic question was thought to be sufficient in determining comprehension, today such a measure is considered too constricting, not very informative, and an insufficient indication of the student's construction of meaning. The framework speaks specifically to the need for assessment to accurately mirror the integrated parts of the language arts that contribute to the wholeness of understanding.

> With the revised curriculum in place, assessment of its effectiveness must depend on tests that reflect the purposes of the curriculum. Teachers and others responsible for assessment will create tests based on significant works whose meanings have import for all students; tests will integrate all of the language arts by including significant reading and writing and reflecting the students' oral skills as well; and tests will focus on students' meaning, not on formalistic features such as plot and character.
>
> *English-Language Arts Framework*, page 33

Few, if any, large scale testing programs have attempted to assess students' ability to construct meaning. Standardized tests have focused exclusively on decoding, word recognition, and comprehension, and "although objective tests are clearly easier to administer, less expensive, and more quickly scored, they can measure only a small portion of what children have learned and understood" (page 35). Since the construction of meaning is the primary purpose of both reading and writing, the CLAS assessment allows students to show what they know through their own unique responses to questions rather than to simply identify correct meanings that test-makers have posited.

CLAS Two-Part System—On-demand and Portfolio

> Effective English-language arts programs include a wide range of assessment techniques to evaluate student's growth in understanding challenging literature, confronting important social issues and values in literature and their own lives, writing clear and lively prose, speaking thoughtfully and effectively, and listening critically, all of which enable students to participate fully in society.
>
> *English-Language Arts Framework*, page 36

Like standardized tests that are given to students one day during the school year, the on-demand portion of the California Learning Assessment System can only provide a snapshot of an individual student's level of performance in reading and writing. While every effort has been made to construct an assessment that gives students multiple opportunities to demonstrate their ability to construct meaning, it is important to emphasize that each score represents the achievement of a particular student on a specific day, responding to a given task for assessment purposes. No student should be labeled as a "three reader" or a "three writer."

The "on-demand" portion of the English-language arts assessment has three major purposes:

1. To establish standards of excellence for students in reading diverse kinds of materials for different purposes and writing to a variety of important types of writing
2. To measure how well students are able to construct meaning through integrated and dynamic interactions among reader, writer, text, and context
3. To improve the instructional program by providing an assessment that reflects the framework and is based on the expertise of some of California's best teachers

In order to truly determine the level at which students are performing, a portfolio of work must be collected and evaluated. A portfolio enables students to:

1. Read, respond to, and compare longer works of literature.
2. Do sustained projects in which reading, writing, speaking, and listening are used in an integrated way.
3. Demonstrate understanding in a variety of modes of expression.
4. Use sources from outside the classroom in extended projects.
5. Produce polished writing samples, using the full writing process.
6. Identify ways of improving their own work.
7. Exhibit originality; go beyond what is taught or expected; develop an area of personal expertise.

Currently CLAS is exploring the use of portfolios as another method of assessment.

Definition of Reading and the Reading Assessment

In our rapidly changing world, students need to understand that there are many purposes for reading, and they need to demonstrate their ability to read for different purposes. Some students may be able to read elaborate directions for playing a video game but be unable to make any sense of a chapter in their history book. They may be able to read the lyrics of a song but be unable to read a poem that has no accompanying sound. They may be able to read a novel but not a voter information booklet. Like the writing assessment that measures how well students write for different purposes, the CLAS reading assessment includes a range of reading purposes that students will encounter throughout their lives. Although we cannot assess reading in the abstract any more than we can assess thinking, we can assess the quality of reading by looking at written and graphic evidence of how the student interacts with the text.

Reading, as defined for the purposes of California's English-language arts assessment, is the process of constructing meaning through transactions with text. In this view of reading, the individual reader assumes responsibility for producing an interpretation of a text guided not only by the language of the text but also by the associations, cultural experiences, and knowledge that the reader brings to the interpretive task. Rather than believing that meaning resides solely within the words on the page, this view of reading emphasizes the role of the individual reader in making meaning through a process that brings together textual and contextual evidence and the distinctive experience and perspective of the reader as meaning-maker.

What exactly does this mean? Because no two individuals have had the same life experiences, each person has a unique way of interpreting information and "constructing meaning." When a person reads a particular text, he may decode and comprehend the words on the page, but the meaning that emerges from the process of reading is based on the individual's life experiences—including personal experience, associations to events in the person's life, cultural background and heritage, and knowledge about the topic. Though individual words in a text have dictionary "meanings," the person reading a text gives the text life and constructs the fuller meaning, drawing on the connections between individual words and his own life experiences.

The framework calls for students to be actively engaged in making sense of important concepts, attitudes, issues, and values related to a text. They should think critically as they explore interests, solve problems, resolve conflicts, clarify values, generate new ideas, synthesize or apply information, set goals, and make decisions in response to the literature they read.

The On-demand Reading Assessment

The *English-Language Arts Framework* calls for . . .

> An assessment program encompassing the full range of goals of the English-language arts program, aligned with what students are expected to learn in the English-language arts program, and providing alternative strategies and forms of testing (page 4).

The CLAS on-demand assessment cannot possibly encompass the full range of goals called for in the framework because the framework is so comprehensive. However, this portion of the assessment has been designed to be that "snapshot" into what students are expected to learn, using alternative strategies and forms of testing.

Texts selected for the on-demand reading assessment are fiction (stories, novel excerpts), nonfiction (articles, essays, biography, autobiography, book excerpts), and poetry, typically appropriate for each grade level tested. Texts may, on occasion, be an excerpt of a long piece; they will always, however, be complete in themselves. Two related texts—a story and poem or an article and story—may be paired. While it is not possible to match specific texts to individual pupils, the assessment does draw on a diverse range of materials deemed suitable for classroom instruction in English-language arts classes. Since students will construct a meaning for a text based on transactions among text, context, and experience, selections for the assessment focus on concepts familiar to students. In all cases, teachers on the development team consider the appropriateness of subject matter and complexity of text for students at each of the tested grade levels.

Collaborative Group Work in the On-demand Assessment

Although the testing of speaking or listening was not stipulated in SB 662, teachers on the development team wanted to assure that this assessment reflects both instructional strategies used in the best classrooms in California and those in the framework. The activities included in the on-demand assessment serve two purposes. First, they allow students to discuss the reading passage, sharing with classmates the elements that they feel were important or exploring a particular aspect of the piece in depth. Second, they engage the students in activities that prepare them for the writing assessment.

The Writing Assessment

Since 1987, the direct assessment of writing has been in place in California. The California Assessment Program (CAP) writing assessment had four major purposes and those continue to be evident in the CLAS assessment.

The four purposes are:
- to monitor achievement in writing in California schools
- to assess the implementation of the *English-Language Arts Model Curriculum Guide (K-8)* and *English-Language Arts Framework*
- to encourage more writing and different type of writing in California classrooms
- to provide information and materials that will help teachers strengthen their writing programs

Criteria for selecting the types of writing to be assessed at elementary, middle, and high school levels included:
- the kinds of writing incorporated in California's best school writing programs
- relationship to students' reading experiences
- consistency with students' cognitive development
- appropriate curriculum sequencing.
- appropriateness for assessment purposes

Four types of writing have been identified for the grade four assessment, and eight types of writing have been identified for the grades eight and ten assessments, however, only some of the types were included at each grade level in the 1993 assessment. Over the next few years, the other types will be added to the on-demand portion or assessed through portfolio.

The types of writing included in 1993 are listed below.

Types of Writing	**GR 4**	**GR 8**	**GR 10**	
Expressive	X			
Autobiographical Incident		X	X	
Firsthand Biography		X		
Reflective Essay			X	
Persuasive	X			
Problem Solution		X		
Speculation About Causes and Effects			X	X
Interpretation			X	

II. The 1993 Reading Assessment

Focus on Literature

A principal goal of the *English-Language Arts Framework* is to revitalize English-language arts instruction through a literature-based curriculum. The 1993 CLAS English-language arts assessment in reading, therefore, focused specifically on student performance in the reading of literature. Through the study of literature, students learn to observe and interpret details, appreciate the precise and artful use of language, and evaluate characters and their actions. They also examine concepts that have universal meanings; struggle with social issues reflected in literature; make judgments about a work and its assertions, arguments, or information; and observe how the world is viewed across various times and cultures.

An effective language arts curriculum encourages students to be intellectually engaged as they read. In such a program students participate actively and with confidence as independent readers and evaluators of literary works. They are encouraged to recognize multiple possibilities for constructing meaning from a text while carefully testing all interpretations against the available textual or contextual evidence. They learn to make connections with, reflect on, analyze, appreciate, and challenge literary works, presenting reasons and developing arguments in support of their judgments. While students are encouraged to enjoy reading, they also learn to observe how texts are constructed and to recognize how texts work to promote positions and ideas that they may prefer to resist.

The CLAS reading assessment supports a literature-based curriculum aligned with the framework. Each form of the assessment has been designed to stimulate thoughtful and critical responses from students. Given the multiple possibilities for reacting to, interpreting, and criticizing any literary work, student performances are not scored on the basis of predetermined "correct answers." The teacher-evaluators who score the reading assessments do not evaluate a student's feelings or attitudes, but rather the quality of the evidence that the student presents in support of any response or interpretation.

All literary texts used in the CLAS assessment of reading have been selected by a committee of elementary, middle grades, and high school teachers representing California's diverse population. Panels of curriculum specialists and representatives of the community at large also review the texts prior to their use in the assessment.

Scoring Guide
for
the California Reading Assessment

Reading, as defined for the purposes of California's English-language arts assessment, is the process of constructing meaning through transactions with text. In this view of reading, the individual reader assumes responsibility for producing an interpretation of a text guided not only by the language of the text but also by the associations, cultural experiences, and knowledge that the reader brings to the interpretive task. Rather than believing that meaning resides solely within the words on the page, this view of reading emphasizes the role of the individual reader in making meaning through a process that brings together textual and contextual evidence and the distinctive experience and perspective of the reader as meaning-maker.

To assess a student's performance in reading is therefore not only to assess the richness and plausibility of the meaning that the student produces but also the quality of the process through which meaning is produced. In some cases, students may be better readers than the evidence seems to show. Raters must give credit for all evidence of the construction of meaning but, at the same time, be careful not to base a score on rater-inferred meanings. Raters will always be alert to graphic or written clues that show indications of reading performance. Raters should also note that neither length of responses nor negative statements about the assessment provide information about the quality of the reading performance.

A score should not be lowered by a chance or occasional misreading of a word, phrase, or fact in a test performance that would otherwise demonstrate a higher level of reading performance. Similarly, the rater must credit an interpretation that is supported by plausible reasons and/or references to the text, even though the interpretation may differ from the rater's own expectations.

When two passages are paired, one more complex than the other, the best readers interpret both passages and explore implications of the pairing. Less able or emerging readers may be less successful at handling the complexities of the more difficult passage and usually focus on the more accessible one. Looking carefully at the responses to both passages gives raters multiple opportunities to rate the overall performance. For the purposes of this assessment, when two selections are used, they both serve as the basis for the reading assessment.

While every effort has been made to construct a reading assessment approach that gives students multiple opportunities to demonstrate their ability to construct meaning from interacting with given texts, it is important to emphasize that each individual reading score represents the reading achievement of a particular student on a specific day, reading given text(s) for assessment purposes. No student should be labeled as a "three reader" or a "five reader" on the basis of any single assessment.

Complex factors that affect student responses include the following:

- The purpose of the reading, as established by the prompt and perhaps modified by the student's own needs as established by his or her relationship to the text
- The nature of the questions and activities in the prompt
- Previous experience with the text type or with the subject of the text

Condition Codes

Raters will score every paper that has any evidence of the construction of meaning. However, there may be instances when a student response is scored using condition codes.

Code	Definition
A	Unscorable/Uninterpretable Evidence • Illegible handwriting • Underlining and highlighting only • Copied section(s) of text or prompt verbatim with no other response • Irrelevant doodling (This option is to be exercised only when there is no perceptible relevance to the text(s) in the prompt. If the text is a story that includes a dog sled race and the student draws a picture of a track event, for example, assuming that there is no other evidence available on the assessment, the paper would receive a score point one. The picture shows a personal connection at least to the word *race* in the text.)
B	Off Topic
C	Blank/No Response
D	Language Other Than English • Entire paper in language other than English (No score; condition code only) • Responds in more than one language (Score English portion and enter score; use condition code to flag that a portion of the response is in another language.)

Reading Performances

The following list of reading performances shows the range of behaviors that readers may engage in as they construct meaning from a text. Readers are not expected to exhibit all these behaviors, but more effective readers are likely to exhibit a wider range of behaviors. In general, readers also demonstrate more advanced levels of achievement by the degree to which they attend to increasingly more complex structures of meaning.

As readers demonstrate the quality, range, and comprehensiveness of their transactions with texts through their writing and graphic representations, they:

1. Demonstrate intellectual engagement with the text: experiment with ideas; think divergently; take risks; express opinions; speculate, hypothesize, visualize characters or scenes, explore alternative scenarios; raise questions; make predictions; think metaphorically.
2. Explore multiple possibilities of meaning; consider cultural and/or psychological nuances and complexities in the text.
3. Fill in gaps; use clues and evidence in the passage to draw conclusions; make warranted and plausible interpretations of ideas, facts, concepts, and/or arguments.
4. Recognize and deal with ambiguities in the text.
5. Revise, reshape, and/or deepen early interpretations.
6. Evaluate; examine the degree of fit between the author's ideas or information and the reader's prior knowledge or experience.
7. Challenge and reflect critically on the text by agreeing or disagreeing, arguing, endorsing, questioning, and/or wondering.
8. Demonstrate understanding of the work as a whole.
9. Attend to the structure of the text: show how the parts work together; how characters and/or other elements of the work are related and change.
10. Show aesthetic appreciation of the text; consider linguistic and structural complexities.
11. Allude to and/or retell specific passage(s) to validate and/or expand ideas.
12. Make meaning of parts of the text.
13. Make connections between the text and their own ideas, experiences, and knowledge.
14. Demonstrate emotional engagement with the text.
15. Retell, summarize, and/or paraphrase with purpose.
16. Reflect on the meaning(s) of the text, including larger or more universal significances; express a new understanding or insight.

Score Point 6 – Exemplary Reading Performance

An exemplary reading performance is insightful, discerning, and perceptive as the reader constructs and reflects on meaning in a text. Readers at this level are sensitive to linguistic, structural, cultural, and psychological nuances and complexities. They fill in gaps in a text, making warranted and responsible assumptions about unstated causes or motivations, or drawing meaning from subtle cues. They differentiate between literal and figurative meanings. They recognize real or seeming contradictions, exploring possibilities for their resolution or tolerating ambiguities. They demonstrate their understanding of the whole work as well as an awareness of how the parts work together to create the whole.

Readers achieving score point six develop connections with and among texts. They connect their understanding of the text not only to their own ideas, experience, and knowledge, but to their history as participants in a culture or larger community, often making connections to other texts or other works of art. Exceptional readers draw on evidence from the text to generate, validate, expand, and reflect on their own ideas.

These readers take risks. They entertain challenging ideas and explore multiple possibilities of meaning as they read, grounding these meanings in their acute perceptions of textual and cultural complexities. They often revise their understanding of a text as they re-read and as additional information or insight becomes available to them. They sometimes articulate a newly developed level of understanding.

Readers performing at level,six challenge the text. They carry on a dialogue with the writer, raising questions, taking exception, agreeing or disagreeing, appreciating or criticizing text features. They may sometimes suggest ways of rewriting the text. They may test the validity of the author's ideas or information, by considering the authority of the author and the nature and quality of evidence presented. They may speculate about the ideology or cultural or historical biases that seem to inform a text, sometimes recognizing and embracing and sometimes resisting the position that a text seems to construct for its reader.

Score Point 5 – Discerning Reading Performance

A reading performance at score point five is discerning, thorough, and perceptive, but will probably show somewhat less insight or sensitivity to textual nuances and complexities than an exemplary reading. These readers are able to fill in gaps in a text, making plausible assumptions from subtle cues; but they engage in these operations with less acuteness of vision than more expert readers. They recognize and differentiate between literal and figurative meanings. They recognize real or seeming contradictions, exploring possibilities for their resolution or tolerating ambiguities. They demonstrate their understanding of the whole work as well as an awareness of how the parts work together to create the whole.

Readers achieving score point five see connections between their own lives and the world of the text. They connect their understanding of the text not only to their own ideas, experience, and knowledge, but to their history as participants in a culture or community. They often make connections to other texts or other works of art; these connections, while always purposeful and connected to the text, may be more predictable than those made by exceptional readers. They also draw on evidence from the text to generate, validate, expand, and reflect on their own ideas.

These readers may explore multiple possibilities of meaning. While they may form firm interpretations early in their reading, they are open to revising their ideas as additional information or insight becomes available to them. They sometimes articulate newly developed levels of understanding.

Readers performing at this level challenge the text. They pose questions, postulate answers, take exception, agree, disagree, speculate; however, the questions and/or issues they raise may not be as insightful or perceptive as those of the reader demonstrating an exemplary reading.

Score Point 4 – Thoughtful Reading Performance

Readers at score point four construct a thoughtful and plausible interpretation of a text. They fill in some gaps in a text, making assumptions about unstated causes or motivations or drawing meaning from cues in the text. They usually differentiate between literal and figurative meanings. They may recognize real or seeming contradictions, but are sometimes distracted by these contradictions and by ambiguities. They demonstrate a thoughtful understanding of the whole work.

Readers achieving score point four develop connections with and among texts. They usually connect their understanding of the text to their own experience and knowledge and sometimes to other texts. When directed, these readers may generate, validate, expand, and/or reflect on their ideas about the text, but with less depth than in a score point five or six response. These readers tend to paraphrase or retell, often thoroughly and purposefully. They also see, however, a more general significance in or wider application of the literal facts of the text.

These readers, while confident, rarely take risks. They accept the text without exploring multiple possibilities of meaning. They tend to present their understanding of a text as fixed and rarely revise their interpretation as they re-read and as additional information becomes available.

Readers demonstrating this level of reading performance sometimes challenge or question the text. They may raise questions and may agree or disagree without explaining their reactions.

Score Point 3 – Literal Reading Performance

Students performing at score point three are literal readers, constructing a plausible but superficial interpretation of the whole work. They show little sensitivity to nuances and complexities; they may not respond to some portion of the text. They usually demonstrate a sense of the whole work, but at a simplistic and literal level.

These readers develop few or no connections with or among texts. Sometimes they connect the text associationally with personal experience, but the connection is generally superficial and unexamined.

Score point three readers are not risk takers. They show little tolerance for textual difficulties or lack of closure. Confronted by textual complexity, they may not address the difficulties. Their reading process tends not to be recursive: having made some initial sense of the text, they are inclined to retain their view without testing or revising it.

Readers at the score point three level of reading performance rarely challenge the text or carry on an internal dialogue with the writer. If they raise questions at all, the questions will be largely unproductive expressions of frustration or low level inquiries (e.g., about word meanings). Any expressed appreciations or criticisms are likely to be simplistic and based on a literal understanding of the text.

Score Point 2 – Limited Reading Performance

A limited reading performance indicates that readers at score point two construct partial and/or reductive meanings for a text. They may demonstrate a superficial understanding of parts of the text. They demonstrate a reductive meaning for the text by overgeneralizing or oversimplifying but seem unable to grasp the whole.

Readers within this range of performance develop few or no connections with texts. They may, as they recognize some idea, continue to write or draw, but their responses will appear to have only a tangential relevance to the text.

These readers seldom ask questions of a text or offer meaningful evaluations of what they read. They tend to abandon or become entangled in difficult sections of a text.

Score Point 1 – Minimal Reading Performance

In a minimal reading performance, the reader appears to understand and respond to an individual word, title, and/or phrase but not in ways that demonstrate even a rudimentary understanding of how these words relate to text ideas.

Any connections such readers may make to their own experience will appear in the form of words or drawings that have textual associations only to an isolated word or phrase. Minimal responses may include vague and unsupported evaluations or responses (e.g., "I like/ don't like this story" or "It's boring.")

Level-one reader responses suggest that these students do not engage in reading as a process of making coherent meaning.

Student Responses to the Reading Assessment

The CLAS English-Language Arts Assessment is divided into three sections: Reading, Group Work, and Writing. The score for reading is based on all of the responses to Section One of the assessment.

Scoring a reading task requires a careful look at all evidence presented by the student. Since there are many opportunities within each task for the student to demonstrate an understanding and an interpretation of a text, the evidence indicating a particular score point is rarely found in the response to any single question on this assessment. A rich response to one question may be followed by a perfunctory response to the next; a drawing may provide the student with ideas for elaboration in a subsequent response. The teacher-evaluator considers all of the reading performances (see Reading Scoring Guide, page II-5) exhibited by the student throughout the task, comparing the quality of the evidence against the criteria defined in the scoring guide. The teacher-evaluator rewards all evidence of a performance, whether in the form of margin notes, graphics, or written responses, and makes a final holistic judgment about the entire performance.

It is important to remember that each sample paper presented here represents the level of performance of that student on a specific day, reading a text for an assessment rather than personal reasons. The student's performance will be affected by many factors, including previous reading experiences and familiarity with the subject matter of the text. No student should be labeled a "two reader" or a "four reader" on the basis of this assessment alone. In order to assess any student's overall reading ability, a student's teacher must look at the entire spectrum of the student's reading performances. This assessment provides an opportunity to add one important piece of information to that overall evaluation.

"Excerpt from Black Boy," the grade ten reading task, asks students to read an excerpt from the autobiographical work by Richard Wright. This excerpt takes place in the 1920s when Wright was 18 years old, living in a southern city where Blacks were not allowed to use the public library.

The best readers show evidence of being engaged with the entire text. They use their background knowledge to decipher how parts of the story interrelate and contribute to the whole. These readers use the text, their background knowledge, and their experiences to construct meaning. They use what they have read to reflect not only on the text but also on their own lives, on the lives of others, or on the human situation.

Most exemplary readers acknowledge the author; they go beyond the information given, asking questions of the author or of themselves, and exploring possible extensions of meaning. They step back from the text, evaluate it, and relate the text to other works they have read, to movies or televisions shows they have seen, or to their own experiences or their awareness of another person's similar experiences.

The less proficient reader is more easily distracted by difficult words or unfamiliar concepts and is likely to have a superficial and fragmentary understanding of the text. These readers usually decide what the text means early in their reading and remain with this initial idea.

Included in the sample student responses that follow are:

- two papers representing score point 6
- two papers representing score point 5
- one paper representing score point 4
- one paper representing score point 3
- one paper representing score point 2
- one paper representing score point 1

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 1

Section One
Reading

Before You Read

You are going to read an excerpt from *Black Boy*, an autobiographical work by African American author Richard Wright. This excerpt takes place in the 1920s, when Wright was 18 years old. He was living in a southern city at a time when Blacks were not allowed to use the public library. In the newspaper he read about a controversial author, H. L. Mencken, and wanted to find out more about him. After considering the various white men he knew from where he worked, Wright approached a man he thought was trustworthy. The man lent Wright a library card, and Wright forged notes requesting books from the library.

Reading Selection

As you read, you may mark up the selection in any way that helps you better understand or remember what you are reading.

Excerpt from
Black Boy
by Richard Wright

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

That night in my rented room, while letting the hot water run over my can of pork and beans in the sink, I opened *A Book of Prefaces* and began to read. I was jarred and shocked by the style, the clear, clean, sweeping sentences. Why did he write like that? And how did one write like that? I pictured the man as a raging demon, slashing with his pen, consumed with hate, denouncing everything American, extolling everything European or German, laughing at the weaknesses of people, mocking God, authority. What was this? I stood up, trying to realize what reality lay behind the meaning of the words ... Yes, this man was fighting, fighting with words. He was using words as a weapon, using them as one would use a club. Could words be weapons? Well, yes, for here they

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 1 (continued)

were. Then, maybe, perhaps, I could use them as a weapon? No. It frightened me. I read on and what amazed me was not what he said, but how on earth anybody had the courage to say it.

Occasionally I glanced up to reassure myself that I was alone in the room. Who were these men about whom Mencken was talking so passionately? Who was Anatole France? Joseph Conrad? Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Dostoevski, George Moore, Gustave Flaubert, Maupassant, Tolstoy, Frank Harris, Mark Twain, Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett, Stephen Crane, Zola, Norris, Gorky, Bergson, Ibsen, Balzac, Bernard Shaw, Dumas, Poe, Thomas Mann, O. Henry, Dreiser, H. G. Wells, Gogol, T. S. Eliot, Gide, Baudelaire, Edgar Lee Masters, Stendhal, Turgenev, Huneker, Nietzsche, and scores of others? Were these men real? Did they exist or had they existed? And how did one pronounce their names?

I ran across many words whose meanings I did not know, and I either looked them up in a dictionary or, before I had a chance to do that, encountered the word in a context that made its meaning clear. But what strange world was this? I concluded the book with the conviction that I had somehow overlooked something terribly important in life. I had once tried to write, had once reveled in feeling, had let my crude imagination roam, but the impulse to dream had been slowly beaten out of me by experience. Now it surged up again and I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing. It was not a matter of believing or disbelieving what I read, but of feeling something new, of being affected by something that made the look of the world different.

As dawn broke I ate my pork and beans, feeling dopey, sleepy. I went to work, but the mood of the book would not die; it lingered, coloring everything I saw, heard, did. I now felt that I knew what the white men were feeling. Merely because I had read a book that had spoken of how they lived and thought, I identified myself with that book.

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading *

expression
Word

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 1 (continued)

I felt vaguely guilty. Would I, filled with bookish notions, act in a manner that would make the whites dislike me?

I forged more notes and my trips to the library became frequent. Reading grew into a passion. My first serious novel was Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*. It made me see my boss, Mr. Gerald, and identify him as an American type. I would smile when I saw him lugging his gold bags into the office. I had always felt a vast distance separating me from the boss, and now I felt closer to him, though still distant. I felt now that I knew him, that I could feel the very limits of his narrow life. And this had happened because I had read a novel about a mythical man called George F. Babbitt.

The plots and stories in the novels did not interest me so much as the point of view revealed. I gave myself over to each novel without reserve, without trying to criticize it; it was enough for me to see and feel something different. And for me, everything was something different. Reading was like a drug, a dope. The novels created moods in which I lived for days. But I could not conquer my sense of guilt, my feeling that the white men around me knew that I was changing, that I had begun to regard them differently.

Whenever I brought a book to the job, I wrapped it in newspaper — a habit that was to persist for years in other cities and under other circumstances. But some of the white men pried into my packages when I was absent and they questioned me.

"Boy, what are you reading those books for?"

"Oh, I don't know, sir."

"That's deep stuff you're reading, boy."

"I'm just killing time, sir."

"You'll addle your brains if you don't watch out."

I read Dreiser's *Jennie Gerhardt* and *Sister Carrie* and they revived in me a vivid sense of my mother's suffering; I was overwhelmed. I grew silent, wondering about the life around me. It would have been impossible for me to

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

says as if critis is abundant. I do not understand critic in books

The book offers a type of freedom, which black men were not allowed to have, or was preferred not.

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 1 (continued)

have told anyone what I derived from these novels, for it was nothing less than a sense of life itself. All my life had shaped me for the realism, the naturalism of the modern novel, and I could not read enough of them.

Steeped in new moods and ideas, I bought a ream of paper and tried to write; but nothing would come, or what did come was flat beyond telling. I discovered that more than desire and feeling were necessary to write and I dropped the idea. Yet I still wondered how it was possible to know people sufficiently to write about them? Could I ever learn about life and people? To me, with my vast ignorance, my Jim Crow station in life, it seemed a task impossible of achievement. I now knew what being a Negro meant. I could endure the hunger. I had learned to live with hate. But to feel that there were feelings denied me, that the very breath of life itself was beyond my reach, that more than anything else hurt, wounded me. I had a new hunger.

In buoying me up, reading also cast me down, made me see what was possible, what I had missed. My tension returned, new, terrible, bitter, surging, almost too great to be contained. I no longer *felt* that the world about me was hostile, killing; I *knew* it. A million times I asked myself what I could do to save myself, and there were no answers. I seemed forever condemned, ringed by walls.

I did not discuss my reading with Mr. Falk, who had lent me his library card; it would have meant talking about myself and that would have been too painful. I smiled each day, fighting desperately to maintain my old behavior, to keep my disposition seemingly sunny. But some of the white men discerned that I had begun to brood.

"Wake up there, boy!" Mr. Olin said one day.

"Sir!" I answered for the lack of a better word.

"You act like you've stolen something," he said.

I laughed in the way I knew he expected me to laugh, but I resolved to be more conscious of myself, to watch my every act, to guard and hide the new knowledge that was dawning within me.

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

books make more worldly

Knowledge is power, almost a part of civility, yet is it possible for it to be the part that distroys civility also?

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 1 (continued)

If I went north, would it be possible for me to build a new life then? But how could a man build a life upon vague, unformed yearnings? I wanted to write and I did not even know the English language. I bought English grammars and found them dull. I felt that I was getting a better sense of the language from novels than from grammars. I read hard, discarding a writer as soon as I felt that I had grasped his point of view. At night the printed page stood before my eyes in sleep.

Mrs. Moss, my landlady, asked me one Sunday morning:

"Son, what is this you keep on reading?"

"Oh, nothing. Just novels."

"What you get out of 'em?"

"I'm just killing time," I said.

"I hope you know your own mind," she said in a tone which implied that she doubted if I had a mind.

I knew of no Negroes who read the books I liked and I wondered if any Negroes ever thought of them. I knew that there were Negro doctors, lawyers, newspapermen, but I never saw any of them. When I read a Negro newspaper I never caught the faintest echo of my preoccupation in its pages. I felt trapped and occasionally, for a few days, I would stop reading. But a vague hunger would come over me for books, books that opened up new avenues of feeling and seeing, and again I would forge another note to the white librarian. Again I would read and wonder as only the naive and unlettered can read and wonder, feeling that I carried a secret, criminal burden about with me each day.

That winter my mother and brother came and we set up housekeeping, buying furniture on the installment plan, being cheated and yet knowing no way to avoid it. I began to eat warm food and to my surprise found that regular meals enabled me to read faster. I may have lived through many illnesses and survived them, never suspecting that I was ill. My brother obtained a job and we began to save toward the trip north, plotting our time, setting tentative

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

mind, idealogy, opinion, derived not
wholy from up bringing but from our
experience and exposure to the many
places of the earth. Blacks not
given the opportunity to learn.
obtain this ability from books
from other places. In a
way suppressed.
Thus little mind
and only the
up bringing;
slave.

feels the existence of a barrier
between Negroes and books.

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 1 (continued)

dates for departure. I told none of the white men on the job that I was planning to go north; I knew that the moment they felt I was thinking of the North they would change toward me. It would have made them feel that I did not like the life I was living, and because my life was completely conditioned by what they said or did, it would have been tantamount to challenging them.

I could calculate my chances for life in the South as a Negro fairly clearly now.

I could fight the southern whites by organizing with other Negroes, as my grandfather had done. But I knew that I could never win that way; there were many whites and there were but few blacks. They were strong and we were weak. Outright black rebellion could never win. If I fought openly I would die and I did not want to die. News of lynchings were frequent.

I could submit and live the life of a genial slave, but that was impossible. All of my life had shaped me to live by my own feelings and thought. I could make up to Bess and marry her and inherit the house. But that, too, would be the life of a slave; if I did that, I would crush to death something within me, and I would hate myself as much as I knew the whites already hated those who had submitted. Neither could I ever willingly present myself to be kicked, as Shorty had done. I would rather have died than do that.

I could drain off my restlessness by fighting with Shorty and Harrison. I had seen many Negroes solve the problem of being black by transferring their hatred of themselves to others with a black skin and fighting them. I would have to be cold to do that, and I was not cold and I could never be.

I could, of course, forget what I had read, thrust the whites out of my mind, forget them; and find release from anxiety and longing in sex and alcohol. But the memory of how my father had conducted himself made that course repugnant. If I did not want others to violate my life, how could I voluntarily violate it myself?

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 1 (continued)

I had no hope whatever of being a professional man. Not only had I been so conditioned that I did not desire it, but the fulfillment of such an ambition was beyond my capabilities. Well-to-do Negroes lived in a world that was almost as alien to me as the world inhabited by whites.

What, then, was there? I held my life in my mind, in my consciousness each day, feeling at times that I would stumble and drop it, spill it forever. My reading had created a vast sense of distance between me and the world in which I lived and tried to make a living, and that sense of distance was increasing each day. My days and nights were one long, quiet, continuously contained dream of terror, tension, and anxiety. I wondered how long I could bear it.

Richard Wright. *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1937, pp. 271-277.

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 1 (continued)

After You Have Read

Now that you have finished reading the selection, respond as fully as you can to the following questions and activities. You may refer to the reading selection as often as you like.

1. What is your response to the excerpt from this autobiography? Take a few minutes to write any thoughts, questions, or opinions you may have.

It is obvious blacks were not allowed literature. Books offer a broader mind, more cultivated ideas and opinions. It seems to me knowledge is a portion of civility, yet it is also the part that can destroy it. This is what "white men" feared. No books, no knowledge, no power to counter (or act upon) their civilization. Books can be taken as word, what is said, or the actual story in other words. A story Can be a source of entertainment. But also if expresses the idea(s) the writer has from his point of view. This includes the culture, land he is from and any experience he/she may have had. Books give freedom, and at the time of this book black Men were not free, not totalley. Richard wright felt the barrier put up between 'Negroes' and books. One last note, on page 5 he states he gave himself over "without criticsm." Too me criticism is not possible when talking of books. Books are to state opinions, experiences, beliefs, not truth. So there is nothing to compare and contrast. You simply accept, or not accept. Read to open yourself to the ideology may it be right or wrong.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 1 (continued)

2. Choose one of the following quotations from the reading selection to write about. Explain what it might mean in the selection, what it means to you, how you feel about it, or any other comments you may have.

   A. "He was using words as weapons...Could words be weapons?"
   B. "...I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing."

I am writing about the quotation labeled ☑ A ☐ B

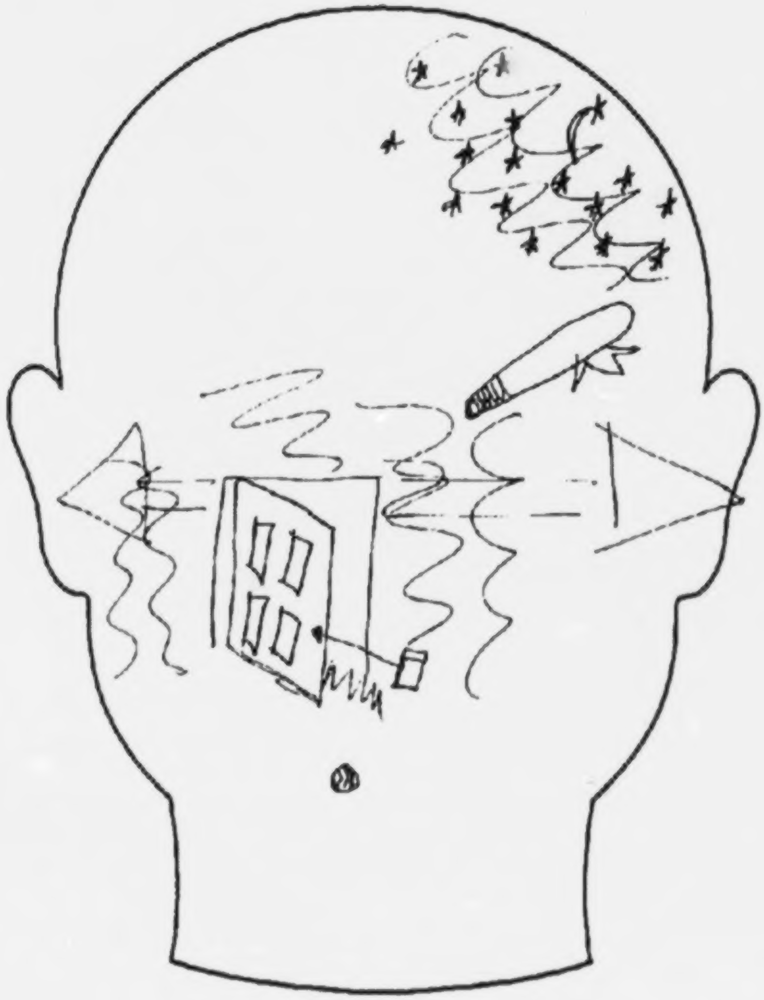
Words can be weapons. A weapon is something that harms another body, or entity. Often weapons are used between opposing sides. In this book it is between 'black" men and 'white' men. Word are very slippery. We can twist them to mean many things, even the opposite of what the actual definition is. Sarcasm is the best example, though only one form. But as far as this passage, it is refering to how word can be used to reveal things, mainly the truth however unpleasant it may be. Also it could be that words can corrupt a mind. A book can present a hypothesis that is rational, but yet rationalized. True it may be fitting to the situation, but the book may neglect to research further or even consider other possibilities. In doing so, this book (not Black Boy specifically) may present a non truth that people may act upon thus doing harm to a/the body. this is what I believe.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 1 (continued)

3. An "open mind" is an outline of a head that lets you show what a character might be thinking or feeling. In the "open mind" below use symbols, images, drawings, and/or words to show what Richard Wright might have been thinking or feeling in this excerpt from the autobiography.

Open Mind for Richard Wright



Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 1 (continued)

4. Explain how the symbols, images, drawings, and/or words you put into your "open mind" represent your ideas about Richard Wright.

Starting from the bottom their is a little world. This is all there is at first. Next is a door at first closed, it is difficult to open the door without a key. For Wright, this key is a book, or books. Books allow this door, this closed door to be opened. When we first glance behind the door we see the club, a weapon, symbolizing the power of words whether for good or bad. Next we see a much larger world. It is a broadened world, made not only larger, but clearer. This clarity is truth. Truth, like the club can be both good or bad. Lastly is the stars and moon. The only purpose to the moon is for you to recognize that it is a night sky glittered with stars. As far as the stars, I chose them because to me they represent endless numbers of points, and for Wright these points are ideas and beliefs of every person, every possibility, regardless of the fact that they may contradict one another. It is also his intention to see the whole sky, not just one star and claim that the truth. All the stars must be looked at, not because they represent the truth, but that we must look at every star, look behind the stars, all of them and find the treasure of truth sort of like turning over every stone. The arrows, the large arrows show there is a wall, or better yet a shroud between the small and larger worlds. And that door is the way past it.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 1 (continued)

5. What were Richard Wright's reactions to the books he read?

He was shocked at the openness of ideas. The great freedom. In some ways this story is patriotic. He was amazed by them, for their giving, granting of knowledge. Yet he was also afraid, for not only did he see a weapon but a disaproval on black men reading such material.

6. At the end of the story, Richard Wright speculates about the kind of future he will choose to have. What do you think he will choose? Why do you think he will make these choices?

I believe he will hold his life the way he had. The changes only being the changes come with a move to a new place. The people will not yet hold a mold to him, they will take him to see how and who he is. Mean while he will continue his readings and slowly become more aware of his place and where he has ability. He can then take advantage of these new people and they will see him as a new person. He may write, he may join a group, but he will not change so drastically as to become another man, such as Shorty, or the professional man.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 1 (continued)

7. This is your chance to tell anything else you want about your understanding of this autobiographical selection — what it means to you, what it reminds you of, how it relates to your own life, or whatever else you think is important about this reading selection.

This story reminded me of Stranger in a Strange land by Heinlein. Both characters experience, or rather notice the vastness to the world outside their knowing. Though each take different means, they become more aware of the world and the way it works. They are both faced by an enemy that is a magority. I believe there is no real right or wrong when it comes to ideas, beliefs, philosophy. Though an action, such as killing a man, would be wrong. Everything has to do with perspective. In one way it is good, the other is bad. But when you look at it as a whole, which is right? Must there be a right? And if so is there a universal right and wrong or does the circumstances matter? When the circumstances matter, them it is a point of view. All very confusing, but it is an outline to what I think this book is saying.

STOP!
This is the end of Section One.

Commentary for Score Point 6 Response - Paper 1

This reader demonstrates insight, discernment, and perception as she constructs meaning and reflects on the implications of her interpretation of a passage from Richard Wright's *Black Boy*. A careful analysis of her responses shows evidence of nearly all of the elements of an exemplary reading performance: the reader is clearly intellectually engaged with the text as she speculates, explores divergent possibilities, and considers both the cultural and psychological nuances and complexities of this text. She does not merely use the text as a springboard for her explorations, but weaves references to the text in and out of her reflections. Her interpretations are sensitive to the complexities of Wright's words; they are both intrinsically thoughtful and grounded in the text.

Evidence of the reading process unfolds slowly with margin notes that at first simply state observations about the literal meaning of the text. By the fourth page of the text, however, the idea of "knowledge as power" has emerged. It is this concept that she explores deeply and thoughtfully as she considers the effects of books on the young Richard Wright. Her exploration of the role of books in Wright's life leads her to examine the nature of knowledge and truth, but the text is always the pivotal element in her reflections.

Throughout this reading performance this student demonstrates exemplary ability to revise and reshape her meaning, often articulating a newly developed level of understanding. In her explanation of the graphic depicting Wright's thoughts, she shows how an attempt to portray ideas graphically can lead to a deeper interpretation; she gives us an opportunity to see how the graphic elements lead her to an articulation of complex metaphorical thinking. From the "little world" at the bottom of the graphic, she moves us systematically through each of the images as she explores the power of words, "whether for good or bad," then moves to a consideration of truth. She expands on her understanding of truth as she explains the stars as the "endless number of points" that for Wright are ideas and beliefs; they represent "every possibility regardless of the fact that they may contradict one another." "It is also his intention to see the whole sky, not just one star," she continues. She uses every opportunity in this assessment to further her exploration.

This reader's final comments lead her to an unprompted comparison of Wright and the protagonist of Heinlein's *Stranger in a Strange Land*. "They are both faced by an enemy that is a majority," she writes. She then continues her philosophical reflections about right and wrong, again returning to *Black Boy* in her last statement: "All very confusing, but it is an outline to what I think this book is saying."

Although reading is so often an internal activity, this reader provides us with clear evidence of a plausible and warranted interpretation as she negotiates meaning, connects ideas in the text to her own knowledge and experience, and reflects on the larger issues stimulated by the text. For a sophomore in high school to demonstrate this quality of thinking gives credence to the high expectations that have been constructed for achieving a score point 6 in this assessment.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 2

Section One
Reading

Before You Read

You are going to read an excerpt from *Black Boy*, an autobiographical work by African American author Richard Wright. This excerpt takes place in the 1920s, when Wright was 18 years old. He was living in a southern city at a time when Blacks were not allowed to use the public library. In the newspaper he read about a controversial author, H. L. Mencken, and wanted to find out more about him. After considering the various white men he knew from where he worked, Wright approached a man he thought was trustworthy. The man lent Wright a library card, and Wright forged notes requesting books from the library.

Reading Selection

As you read, you may mark up the selection in any way that helps you better understand or remember what you are reading.

Excerpt from
Black Boy
by Richard Wright

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

That night in my rented room, while letting the hot water run over my can of pork and beans in the sink, I opened *A Book of Prefaces* and began to read. I was jarred and shocked by the style, the clear, clean, sweeping sentences. Why did he write like that? And how did one write like that? I pictured the man as a raging demon, slashing with his pen, consumed with hate, denouncing everything American, extolling everything European or German, laughing at the weaknesses of people, mocking God, authority. What was this? I stood up, trying to realize what reality lay behind the meaning of the words ... Yes, this man was fighting, fighting with words. He was using words as a weapon, using them as one would use a club. Could words be weapons? Well, yes, for here they

-Superman

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 2 (continued)

were. Then, maybe, perhaps, I could use them as a weapon? No. It frightened me. I read on and what amazed me was not what he said, but how on earth anybody had the courage to say it.

Occasionally I glanced up to reassure myself that I was alone in the room. Who were these men about whom Mencken was talking so passionately? Who was Anatole France? Joseph Conrad? Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Dostoevski, George Moore, Gustave Flaubert, Maupassant, Tolstoy, Frank Harris, Mark Twain, Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett, Stephen Crane, Zola, Norris, Gorky, Bergson, Ibsen, Balzac, Bernard Shaw, Dumas, Poe, Thomas Mann, O. Henry, Dreiser, H. G. Wells, Gogol, T. S. Eliot, Gide, Baudelaire, Edgar Lee Masters, Stendhal, Turgenev, Huneker, Nietzsche, and scores of others? Were these men real? Did they exist or had they existed? And how did one pronounce their names?

I ran across many words whose meanings I did not know, and I either looked them up in a dictionary or, before I had a chance to do that, encountered the word in a context that made its meaning clear. But what strange world was this? I concluded the book with the conviction that I had somehow overlooked something terribly important in life. I had once tried to write, had once reveled in feeling, had let my crude imagination roam, but the impulse to dream had been slowly beaten out of me by experience. Now it surged up again and I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing. It was not a matter of believing or disbelieving what I read, but of feeling something new, of being affected by something that made the look of the world different.

As dawn broke I ate my pork and beans, feeling dopey, sleepy. I went to work, but the mood of the book would not die; it lingered, coloring everything I saw, heard, did. I now felt that I knew what the white men were feeling. Merely because I had read a book that had spoken of how they lived and thought, I identified myself with that book.

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

– I do that

powerful by association

I know that feeling

Using knowledge to "become" somebody

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 2 (continued)

I felt vaguely guilty. Would I, filled with bookish notions, act in a manner that would make the whites dislike me?

I forged more notes and my trips to the library became frequent. [Reading grew into a passion.] My first serious novel was Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*. It made me see my boss, Mr. Gerald, and identify him as an American type. I would smile when I saw him lugging his gold bags into the office. I had always felt a vast distance separating me from the boss, and now I felt closer to him, though still distant. I felt now that I knew him, that I could feel the very limits of his narrow life. And this had happened because I had read a novel about a mythical man called George F. Babbitt.

The plots and stories in the novels did not interest me so much as the point of view revealed. I gave myself over to each novel without reserve, without trying to criticize it; it was enough for me to see and feel something different. And for me, everything was something different. Reading was like a drug, a dope. The novels created moods in which I lived for days. But I could not conquer my sense of guilt, my feeling that the white men around me knew that I was changing, that I had begun to regard them differently.

Whenever I brought a book to the job, I wrapped it in newspaper — a habit that was to persist for years in other cities and under other circumstances. But some of the white men pried into my packages when I was absent and they questioned me.

"Boy, what are you reading those books for?"

"Oh, I don't know, sir."

"That's deep stuff you're reading, boy."

"I'm just killing time, sir."

"You'll addle your brains if you don't watch out."

I read Dreiser's *Jennie Gerhardt* and *Sister Carrie* and they revived in me a vivid sense of my mother's suffering; I was overwhelmed. I grew silent, wondering about the life around me. It would have been impossible for me to

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

feeling delight
secrets

sheltered
people
I know

moods
affected so
easily

endangered

— everything
Fred did -
Ginger did
backwards and
in heels.

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 2 (continued)

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

have told anyone what I derived from these novels, for it was nothing less than a sense of life itself. All my life had shaped me for the realism, the naturalism of the modern novel, and I could not read enough of them.

Steeped in new moods and ideas, I bought a ream of paper and tried to write; but nothing would come, or what did come was flat beyond telling. I discovered that more than desire and feeling were necessary to write and I dropped the idea. Yet I still wondered how it was possible to know people sufficiently to write about them? Could I ever learn about life and people? To me, with my vast ignorance, my Jim Crow station in life, it seemed a task impossible of achievement. I now knew what being a Negro meant. I could endure the hunger. I had learned to live with hate. [But to feel that there were feelings denied me, that the very breath of life itself was beyond my reach, that more than anything else hurt, wounded me. I had a new hunger.]

- I love to read about characters and situations I see situation to my own

In buoying me up, reading also cast me down, made me see what was possible, what I had missed. My tension returned, new, terrible, bitter, surging, almost too great to be contained. I no longer *felt* that the world about me was hostile, killing; I *knew* it. A million times I asked myself what I could do to save myself, and there were no answers. I seemed forever condemned, ringed by walls.

I like the listing

I did not discuss my reading with Mr. Falk, who had lent me his library card; it would have meant talking about myself and that would have been too painful. I smiled each day, fighting desperately to maintain my old behavior, to keep my disposition seemingly sunny. But some of the white men discerned that I had begun to brood.

hard to talk about yourself

"Wake up there, boy!" Mr. Olin said one day.

"Sir!" I answered for the lack of a better word.

"You act like you've stolen something," he said.

guarding emotion

I laughed in the way I knew he expected me to laugh, but I resolved to be more conscious of myself, to watch my every act, to guard and hide the new knowledge that was dawning within me.

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 2 (continued)

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

If I went north, would it be possible for me to build a new life then? But how could a man build a life upon vague, unformed yearnings? I wanted to write and I did not even know the English language. I bought English grammars and found them dull. I felt that I was getting a better sense of the language from novels than from grammars. I read hard, discarding a writer as soon as I felt that I had grasped his point of view. At night the printed page stood before my eyes in sleep.

Mrs. Moss, my landlady, asked me one Sunday morning:

"Son, what is this you keep on reading?"

"Oh, nothing. Just novels."

"What you get out of 'em?"

"I'm just killing time," I said.

"I hope you know your own mind," she said in a tone which implied that she doubted if I had a mind.

– yes!

I knew of no Negroes who read the books I liked and I wondered if any Negroes ever thought of them. I knew that there were Negro doctors, lawyers, newspapermen, but I never saw any of them. When I read a Negro newspaper I never caught the faintest echo of my preoccupation in its pages. I felt trapped and occasionally, for a few days, I would stop reading. But a vague hunger would come over me for books, books that opened up new avenues of feeling and seeing, and again I would forge another note to the white librarian. Again I would read and wonder as only the naive and unlettered can read and wonder, feeling that I carried a secret, criminal burden about with me each day.

Author's snippets show life

That winter my mother and brother came and we set up housekeeping, buying furniture on the installment plan, being cheated and yet knowing no way to avoid it. I began to eat warm food and to my surprise found that regular meals enabled me to read faster. I may have lived through many illnesses and survived them, never suspecting that I was ill. My brother obtained a job and we began to save toward the trip north, plotting our time, setting tentative

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 2 (continued)

dates for departure. I told none of the white men on the job that I was planning to go north; I knew that the moment they felt I was thinking of the North they would change toward me. It would have made them feel that I did not like the life I was living, and because my life was completely conditioned by what they said or did, it would have been tantamount to challenging them.

I could calculate my chances for life in the South as a Negro fairly clearly now.

I could fight the southern whites by organizing with other Negroes, as my grandfather had done. But I knew that I could never win that way; there were many whites and there were but few blacks. They were strong and we were weak. Outright black rebellion could never win. If I fought openly I would die and I did not want to die. News of lynchings were frequent.

I could submit and live the life of a genial slave, but that was impossible. All of my life had shaped me to live by my own feelings and thought. I could make up to Bess and marry her and inherit the house. But that, too, would be the life of a slave; if I did that, I would crush to death something within me, and I would hate myself as much as I knew the whites already hated those who had submitted. Neither could I ever willingly present myself to be kicked, as Shorty had done. I would rather have died than do that.

I could drain off my restlessness by fighting with Shorty and Harrison. I had seen many Negroes solve the problem of being black by transferring their hatred of themselves to others with a black skin and fighting them. I would have to be cold to do that, and I was not cold and I could never be.

I could, of course, forget what I had read, thrust the whites out of my mind, forget them; and find release from anxiety and longing in sex and alcohol. But the memory of how my father had conducted himself made that course repugnant. If I did not want others to violate my life, how could I voluntarily violate it myself?

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

grew up Ⓦ equality fighters

- did that before

- gee - how do I want to live

- spiritual death

LA RIOTS
Gang

boom
boom
boom
boom
patterning
I like

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 2 (continued)

I had no hope whatever of being a professional man. Not only had I been so conditioned that I did not desire it, but the fulfillment of such an ambition was beyond my capabilities. Well-to-do Negroes lived in a world that was almost as alien to me as the world inhabited by whites.

What, then, was there? I held my life in my mind, in my consciousness each day, feeling at times that I would stumble and drop it, spill it forever. My reading had created a vast sense of distance between me and the world in which I lived and tried to make a living, and that sense of distance was increasing each day. My days and nights were one long, quiet, continuously contained dream of terror, tension, and anxiety. I wondered how long I could bear it.

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

- fragile

- dream world

Richard Wright. *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1937, pp. 271-277.

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 2 (continued)

After You Have Read

Now that you have finished reading the selection, respond as fully as you can to the following questions and activities. You may refer to the reading selection as often as you like.

1. What is your response to the excerpt from this autobiography? Take a few minutes to write any thoughts, questions, or opinions you may have.

I really liked this selection. I thought Wright's insight into how the written word can inflame and spark the passions and desires of ~~the~~ even the casual reader was very well put. Books and their ideas are mysterious and can create lasting impressions. There is a quote "I never knew a girl who was ruined by a book" and I always agreed with this. Now I see how a peice of writing can be the catalyst that begins a chain of events. Wright might never have seen the possibilities to dream, if he hadn't discovered the elusive and provocative messages that books can bring.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 2 (continued)

2. Choose one of the following quotations from the reading selection to write about. Explain what it might mean in the selection, what it means to you, how you feel about it, or any other comments you may have.

   A. "He was using words as weapons...Could words be weapons?"
   B. "...I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing."

I am writing about the quotation labeled ☐ A ☑ B

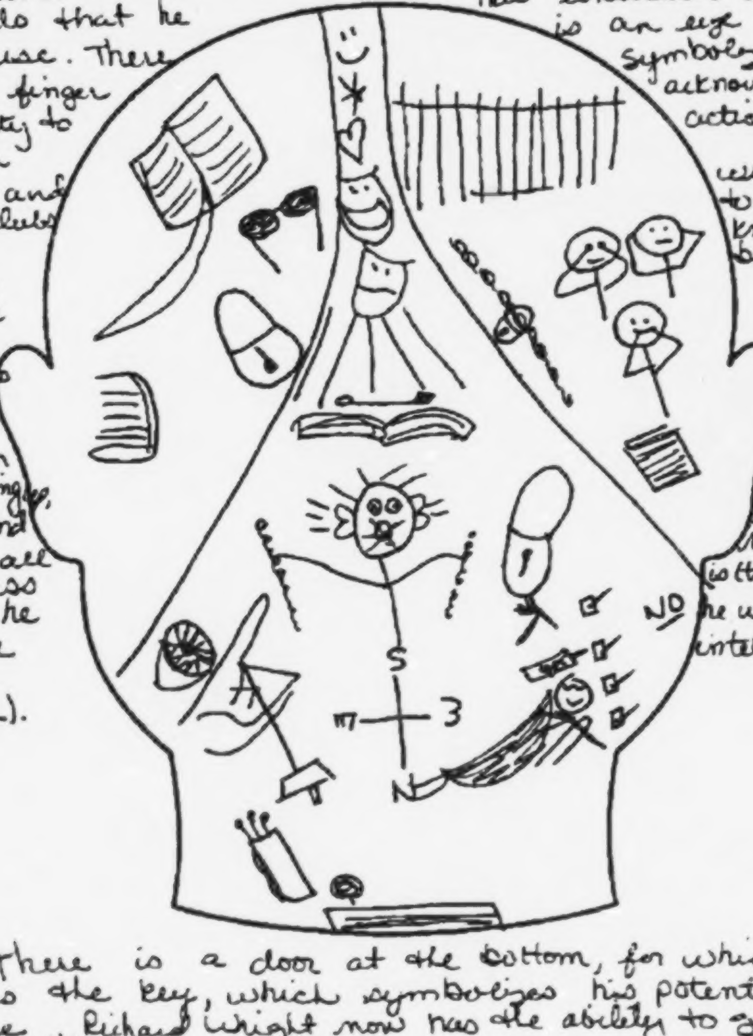
Hungering for new ways of looking and seeing is something probaby all high school students do. In my life in a smaller town, I know that there are people growing up and living lives that are shamefully sheltered. A friend of mine cannot stand the private school he attends because the students there do not see the world around them. They do not see the homelessness, the hunger, the poverty and violence. These sheltered teenagers ~~with~~ must open their eyes to new ways of looking at life and see truly how lucky they are, if not do something about the problems they encounter. These people need hunger for new ways of seeing the world, to make themselves people of

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 2 (continued)

3. An "open mind" is an outline of a head that lets you show what a character might be thinking or feeling. In the "open mind" below use symbols, images, drawings, and/or words to show what Richard Wright might have been thinking or feeling in this excerpt from the autobiography.

Open Mind for Richard Wright

* symbolizing his new found sense of what should and shouldn't be. there are opened locks and swords that he has unlocked and can use. There is an eye and a pointed finger symbolizing Wright's new ability to acknowledge and plan action towards injustice and wrong. There are golf clubs to show his satisfying knowledge about his boss and the white people. There is a series of checked boxes with labels that shows the different ways he is considering to better his situation i.e. fighting whites, blacks, putting up with everything, or drinking and womanizing. He denounces all these things. There is a compass rose which stands for where he (is trapped in the South) and where he wants to be free to be an intelligent person in the North).



There is a door at the bottom, for which he has the key, which symbolizes his potential escape to the north. Richard Wright now has the ability to get out.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 2 (continued)

4. Explain how the symbols, images, drawings, and/or words you put into your "open mind" represent your ideas about Richard Wright.

The narrow 'canal' opening into the open space represents Wright's opening consciousness. Within the narrow section there are symbols of complacency and what he though was happiness. One of these is a mask which means he had a mask towards the white people. The last fase is realizing what is in this book, and the opening of the canal is an epiphany or a 'birth', if you will. Wright finds a key in this book. This key stands for his discovering the passion, ideas and knowledge in the books. Outside the canal is all that was denied him before; closed books, closed locks and gates symbolizing paths and "new way of looking and seeing" that Wright didn't know about. There is a sword to symbolize the fighting passion Wright did not know about. The dark glasses means that he could not see. The "see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil" figures stand for Wright's ignorance, literally not seeing or hearing and therefor not speaking about evil. In the large part of canal there is a figure of Wright seeing, hearing and speaking (to himself at least) about the things he has discovered and the things he can no longer put up with. Wright holds the unlocked chains cont→

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 2 (continued)

5. What were Richard Wright's reactions to the books he read?

Wright reacted to the books in several ways. At first he was "jarred and shocked" and was surprised that people could attack the institutions he was taught to revere. He was also nervous, and guilty, after all he could be doing something wrong. Wright was then passionate and enthralled, yet also silent, trying to hide his newfound insight into the life going on around him. Wright then became angry and tense, knowing there was something better and desperately wanting it.

6. At the end of the story, Richard Wright speculates about the kind of future he will choose to have. What do you think he will choose? Why do you think he will make these choices?

I think that Richard Wright will choose to leave the South. He is smart to identify the choices that will not work and discard them. He knows he cannot settle for complacency. In *The Book of Qualities* it is said that "that complacency has volcanoes inside of her and she must will one day explode." Richard Wright knows there are volcanoes inside of him. He just needs to channel and use his fire for his cause, and not let it consume him.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 - Paper 2 (continued)

7. This is your chance to tell anything else you want about your understanding of this autobiographical selection — what it means to you, what it reminds you of, how it relates to your own life, or whatever else you think is important about this reading selection.

This peice is important to me because books are. Books are a release for me as much as playing a role or dancing, singing or competing in a sport or discussion are. I love to find new ways of looking at life and to create new passion in myself. When I read this section I identified with Wright's ephiphanies and realizations. When Wright said "But to fell that there were feelings denied me, that the very breath of life itself was beyond my reach, that more than anything else hurt, wounded me. I had a new hunger..." I wanted to leap up and say "Yes!" I had found two sentences that decribed my whole political philosophy, my whole desires, my reasons for doing what I do and wanting what I want. This quote described the pull that dictates my life, if not exactly. The feeling he feels, hunger, is the emotion that I let rule me. I think I better read this book.

STOP!
This is the end of Section One.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Commentary for Score Point 6 Response - Paper 2

Readers performing at score point 6 often begin their responses by showing their immediate engagement with the text. This exemplary reader connects personally to the text throughout the margin notes, frequently making comments such as: "I do that.... I know that feeling ... sheltered people I know." These insightful margin notes also show us a reader who fills in gaps, "everything Fred did — Ginger did backwards and in heels" and appreciates the text's structural complexity, "I like the listing ... boom boom boom boom patterns I like."

This reader begins to construct her understanding in the initial response activity by reflecting, "I thought Wright's insight into how the written word can inflame and spark the passions and desires of even the casual reader was well put." In this same response the reader risks articulating a newly developed level of understanding: "Now I see how a piece of writing can be the catalyst that begins a chain of events. Wright might never have even seen the possibilities to dream, if he hadn't discovered the elusive and provocative messages that books can bring."

In Item 2 the reader uses background experience to expand and validate text ideas. She comments that her friend knows students who do "not see the homelessness, the hunger the poverty and violence." Using Wright's language the reader expresses her opinions about these students by saying, "these sheltered teenagers must open their eyes to new ways of looking at life and see truly how lucky they are ...." This exceptional reader uses the test to expand and reflect on her own ideas.

In the responses to items 3 and 4, this student creates a rich and complex exploration of Richard's character. In the graphic, she uses metaphors and symbols to reflect on the psychological nuances, opening up the possibilities for meaning in this text. The reader uses the narrow canal opening as a metaphor to "represent Wright's opening concsiousness." She continues by showing "outside the canal is all that is denied him before, closed books, closed locks and gates symbolizing paths and 'new way of looking and seeing' that Wright didn't know about." After this thorough response to the graphic, the reader concludes with a speculation for Richard: "There is a door at the bottom for which he has the key, which symbolizes his potential escape to the North, Richard Wright now has the ability to get out."

This exemplary reading continues to grow and expand in the last three responses. In Item 5 the reader shows her awareness of the whole text by expressing the full range of Richard's emotions throughout the text. She also demonstrates insight into Wright's character, saying, "Wright then became angry and tense, knowing there was something better and desperately wanting it." She expands this idea in Item 6, speculating that Richard will go South. In this somewhat predictable response the reader shows her discernment by adding that "Richard is smart to identify the choices that will not work and discard them." Her culminating reflection of Richard is another example of her well-developed metaphorical thinking: "Richard Wright knows there are volcanoes

Commentary for Score Point 6 Response - Paper 2

inside of him. He just needs to channel and use his fire for his cause and not let it consume him."

In her response to the final item, the reader connects passionately with the text. She says, "I identified with Wright's ephipenies and realizations. When Wright said 'But to feel that these were feelings denied me….' I wanted to leap up and say 'Yes!' I had found two sentences that described my whole political philosophy." This reader concludes with every English teacher's wildest dream. She says, "This quote described the pull that dictates my life, if not exactly. The feeling he feels, hunger, is the emotion that I let rule me. I think I better read this book."

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 1

Section One
Reading

Before You Read

You are going to read an excerpt from *Black Boy*, an autobiographical work by African American author Richard Wright. This excerpt takes place in the 1920s, when Wright was 18 years old. He was living in a southern city at a time when Blacks were not allowed to use the public library. In the newspaper he read about a controversial author, H. L. Mencken, and wanted to find out more about him. After considering the various white men he knew from where he worked, Wright approached a man he thought was trustworthy. The man lent Wright a library card, and Wright forged notes requesting books from the library.

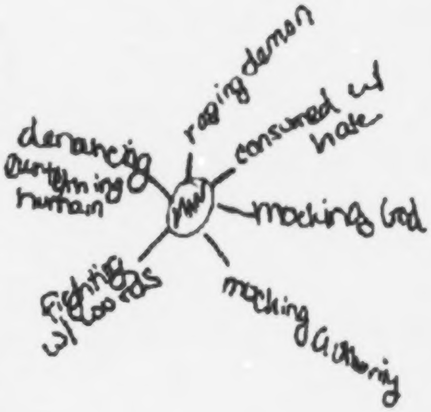
Reading Selection

As you read, you may mark up the selection in any way that helps you better understand or remember what you are reading.

Excerpt from
Black Boy
by Richard Wright

That night in my rented room, while letting the hot water run over my can of pork and beans in the sink, I opened *A Book of Prefaces* and began to read. I was jarred and shocked by the style, the clear, clean, sweeping sentences. Why did he write like that? And how did one write like that? I pictured the man as a raging demon, slashing with his pen, consumed with hate, denouncing everything American, extolling everything European or German, laughing at the weaknesses of people, mocking God, authority. What was this? I stood up, trying to realize what reality lay behind the meaning of the words ... Yes, this man was fighting, fighting with words. He was using words as a weapon, using them as one would use a club. Could words be weapons? Well, yes, for here they

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*



---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 1 (continued)

were. Then, maybe, perhaps, I could use them as a weapon? No. It frightened me. I read on and what amazed me was not what he said, but how on earth anybody had the courage to say it.

Occasionally I glanced up to reassure myself that I was alone in the room. Who were these men about whom Mencken was talking so passionately? Who was Anatole France? Joseph Conrad? Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Dostoevski, George Moore, Gustave Flaubert, Maupassant, Tolstoy, Frank Harris, Mark Twain, Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett, Stephen Crane, Zola, Norris, Gorky, Bergson, Ibsen, Balzac, Bernard Shaw, Dumas, Poe, Thomas Mann, O. Henry, Dreiser, H. G. Wells, Gogol, T. S. Eliot, Gide, Baudelaire, Edgar Lee Masters, Stendhal, Turgenev, Huneker, Nietzsche, and scores of others? Were these men real? Did they exist or had they existed? And how did one pronounce their names?

I ran across many words whose meanings I did not know, and I either looked them up in a dictionary or, before I had a chance to do that, encountered the word in a context that made its meaning clear. But what strange world was this? I concluded the book with the conviction that I had somehow overlooked something terribly important in life. I had once tried to write, had once reveled in feeling, had let my crude imagination roam, but the impulse to dream had been slowly beaten out of me by experience. Now it surged up again and I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing. It was not a matter of believing or disbelieving what I read, but of feeling something new, of being affected by something that made the look of the world different.

As dawn broke I ate my pork and beans, feeling dopey, sleepy. I went to work, but the mood of the book would not die; it lingered, coloring everything I saw, heard, did. I now felt that I knew what the white men were feeling. Merely because I had read a book that had spoken of how they lived and thought, I identified myself with that book.

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

years ago, people were more shocked than anything at the fact that someone said something. People don't even hear the message

Books can make people realize things that noone can tell you or show you.

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 1 (continued)

I felt vaguely guilty. Would I, filled with bookish notions, act in a manner that would make the whites dislike me?

I forged more notes and my trips to the library became frequent. Reading grew into a passion. My first serious novel was Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*. It made me see my boss, Mr. Gerald, and identify him as an American type. I would smile when I saw him lugging his gold bags into the office. I had always felt a vast distance separating me from the boss, and now I felt closer to him, though still distant. I felt now that I knew him, that I could feel the very limits of his narrow life. And this had happened because I had read a novel about a mythical man called George F. Babbitt.

The plots and stories in the novels did not interest me so much as the point of view revealed. I gave myself over to each novel without reserve, without trying to criticize it; it was enough for me to see and feel something different. And for me, everything was something different. Reading was like a drug, a dope. The novels created moods in which I lived for days. But I could not conquer my sense of guilt, my feeling that the white men around me knew that I was changing, that I had begun to regard them differently.

Whenever I brought a book to the job, I wrapped it in newspaper — a habit that was to persist for years in other cities and under other circumstances. But some of the white men pried into my packages when I was absent and they questioned me.

"Boy, what are you reading those books for?"

"Oh, I don't know, sir."

"That's deep stuff you're reading, boy."

"I'm just killing time, sir."

"You'll addle your brains if you don't watch out."

I read Dreiser's *Jennie Gerhardt* and *Sister Carrie* and they revived in me a vivid sense of my mother's suffering; I was overwhelmed. I grew silent, wondering about the life around me. It would have been impossible for me to

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

- I think this boy's boss is a white man and has never even tried to relate to this black kid that works for him.

- People that were other than black brainwashed this kid in thinking that books would "addle his brains".

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 1 (continued)

have told anyone what I derived from these novels, for it was nothing less than a sense of life itself. All my life had shaped me for the realism, the naturalism of the modern novel, and I could not read enough of them.

Steeped in new moods and ideas, I bought a ream of paper and tried to write; but nothing would come, or what did come was flat beyond telling. I discovered that more than desire and feeling were necessary to write and I dropped the idea. Yet I still wondered how it was possible to know people sufficiently to write about them? Could I ever learn about life and people? To me, with my vast ignorance, my Jim Crow station in life, it seemed a task impossible of achievement. I now knew what being a Negro meant. I could endure the hunger. I had learned to live with hate. But to feel that there were feelings denied me, that the very breath of life itself was beyond my reach, that more than anything else hurt, wounded me. I had a new hunger.

In buoying me up, reading also cast me down, made me see what was possible, what I had missed. My tension returned, new, terrible, bitter, surging, almost too great to be contained. I no longer *felt* that the world about me was hostile, killing; I *knew* it. A million times I asked myself what I could do to save myself, and there were no answers. I seemed forever condemned, ringed by walls.

I did not discuss my reading with Mr. Falk, who had lent me his library card; it would have meant talking about myself and that would have been too painful. I smiled each day, fighting desperately to maintain my old behavior, to keep my disposition seemingly sunny. But some of the white men discerned that I had begun to brood.

"Wake up there, boy!" Mr. Olin said one day.

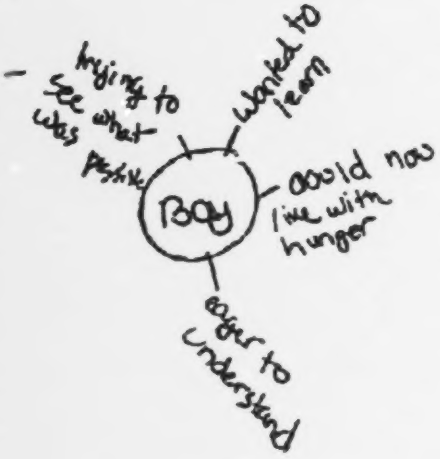
"Sir!" I answered for the lack of a better word.

"You act like you've stolen something," he said.

I laughed in the way I knew he expected me to laugh, but I resolved to be more conscious of myself, to watch my every act, to guard and hide the new knowledge that was dawning within me.

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

-I Wish I had the desire to read as many books as this person dose.



---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 1 (continued)

If I went north, would it be possible for me to build a new life then? But how could a man build a life upon vague, unformed yearnings? I wanted to write and I did not even know the English language. I bought English grammars and found them dull. I felt that I was getting a better sense of the language from novels than from grammars. I read hard, discarding a writer as soon as I felt that I had grasped his point of view. At night the printed page stood before my eyes in sleep.

Mrs. Moss, my landlady, asked me one Sunday morning:

"Son, what is this you keep on reading?"

"Oh, nothing. Just novels."

"What you get out of 'em?"

"I'm just killing time," I said.

"I hope you know your own mind," she said in a tone which implied that she doubted if I had a mind.

I knew of no Negroes who read the books I liked and I wondered if any Negroes ever thought of them. I knew that there were Negro doctors, lawyers, newspapermen, but I never saw any of them. When I read a Negro newspaper I never caught the faintest echo of my preoccupation in its pages. I felt trapped and occasionally, for a few days, I would stop reading. But a vague hunger would come over me for books, books that opened up new avenues of feeling and seeing, and again I would forge another note to the white librarian. Again I would read and wonder as only the naive and unlettered can read and wonder, feeling that I carried a secret, criminal burden about with me each day.

That winter my mother and brother came and we set up housekeeping, buying furniture on the installment plan, being cheated and yet knowing no way to avoid it. I began to eat warm food and to my surprise found that regular meals enabled me to read faster. I may have lived through many illnesses and survived them, never suspecting that I was ill. My brother obtained a job and we began to save toward the trip north, plotting our time, setting tentative

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

- Reading shouldn't be a crime and why dose this boy have to tell people he's just killing time? Reading is more than that to him.

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 1 (continued)

dates for departure. I told none of the white men on the job that I was planning to go north; I knew that the moment they felt I was thinking of the North they would change toward me. It would have made them feel that I did not like the life I was living, and because my life was completely conditioned by what they said or did, it would have been tantamount to challenging them.

I could calculate my chances for life in the South as a Negro fairly clearly now.

I could fight the southern whites by organizing with other Negroes, as my grandfather had done. But I knew that I could never win that way; there were many whites and there were but few blacks. They were strong and we were weak. Outright black rebellion could never win. If I fought openly I would die and I did not want to die. News of lynchings were frequent.

I could submit and live the life of a genial slave, but that was impossible. All of my life had shaped me to live by my own feelings and thought. I could make up to Bess and marry her and inherit the house. But that, too, would be the life of a slave; if I did that, I would crush to death something within me, and I would hate myself as much as I knew the whites already hated those who had submitted. Neither could I ever willingly present myself to be kicked, as Shorty had done. I would rather have died than do that.

I could drain off my restlessness by fighting with Shorty and Harrison. I had seen many Negroes solve the problem of being black by transferring their hatred of themselves to others with a black skin and fighting them. I would have to be cold to do that, and I was not cold and I could never be.

I could, of course, forget what I had read, thrust the whites out of my mind, forget them; and find release from anxiety and longing in sex and alcohol. But the memory of how my father had conducted himself made that course repugnant. If I did not want others to violate my life, how could I voluntarily violate it myself?

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

This person's life was sculpted by the White people around him and it would offend them to know that he wasn't happy with it.

"If I did not want others to violate my life, how could I voluntarily violate it myself?"

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 1 (continued)

I had no hope whatever of being a professional man. Not only had I been so conditioned that I did not desire it, but the fulfillment of such an ambition was beyond my capabilities. Well-to-do Negroes lived in a world that was almost as alien to me as the world inhabited by whites.

What, then, was there? I held my life in my mind, in my consciousness each day, feeling at times that I would stumble and drop it, spill it forever. My reading had created a vast sense of distance between me and the world in which I lived and tried to make a living, and that sense of distance was increasing each day. My days and nights were one long, quiet, continuously contained dream of terror, tension, and anxiety. I wondered how long I could bear it.

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

—"I wondered how long I could bear the tension, anxiety & terror!"

Richard Wright. *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1937, pp. 271-277.

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 1 (continued)

After You Have Read

Now that you have finished reading the selection, respond as fully as you can to the following questions and activities. You may refer to the reading selection as often as you like.

1. What is your response to the excerpt from this autobiography? Take a few minutes to write any thoughts, questions, or opinions you may have.

This Autobiography made me realize just how important books really are. I didn't know that negroes weren't allowed in libraries or that other people told blacks that books were bad for them.

Reading this makes me want to learn more about black history and my history as well. I want to learn more about people and how they reacted in different situations in history. Learning that, will help me understand people today; and predict people's actions in the future.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 1 (continued)

2. Choose one of the following quotations from the reading selection to write about. Explain what it might mean in the selection, what it means to you, how you feel about it, or any other comments you may have.

   A. "He was using words as weapons...Could words be weapons?"
   B. "...I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing."

I am writing about the quotation labeled ☑ A ☐ B

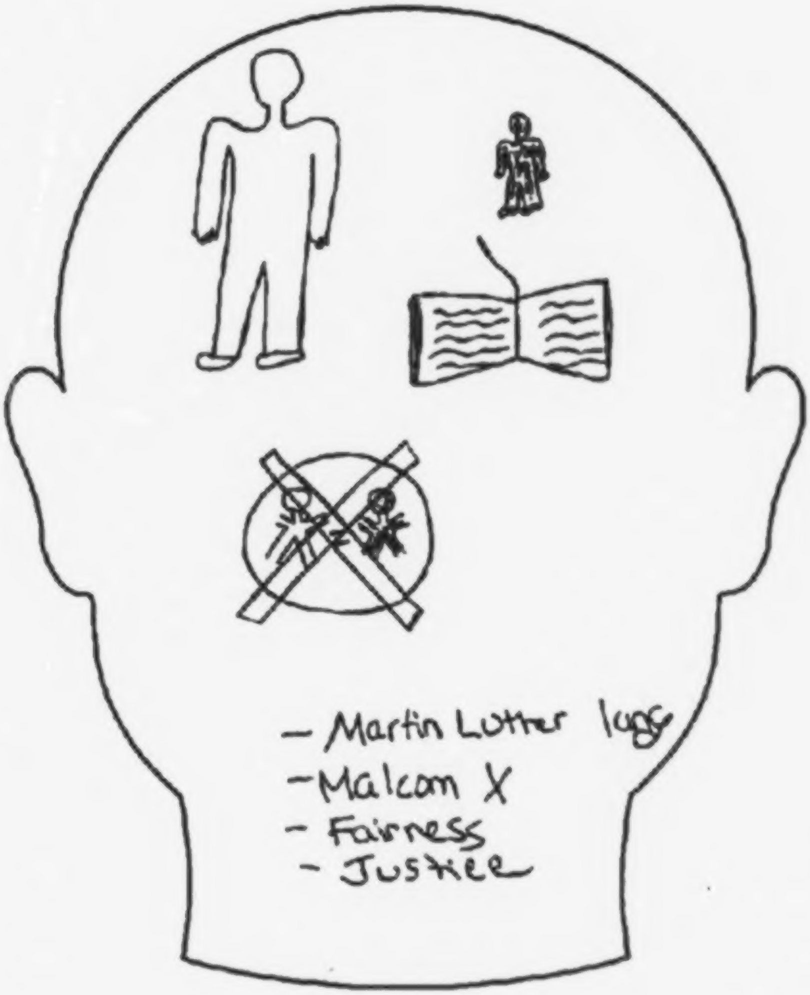
Lashing out, cutting, punching; not a violent madman. No, just the words of a madman, Words can cut like a knife, Maybe they won't physicially cut your flesh but they can scar your mind, your emotions and your heart.

Sometimes harsh words are good and make you realize things. Other times they can just hurt and do nothing but make you think of unhappiness. Words can be as sweet as a flower or as deadly as a dagger.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 1 (continued)

3. An "open mind" is an outline of a head that lets you show what a character might be thinking or feeling. In the "open mind" below use symbols, images, drawings, and/or words to show what Richard Wright might have been thinking or feeling in this excerpt from the autobiography.

Open Mind for Richard Wright



Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 1 (continued)

4. Explain how the symbols, images, drawings, and/or words you put into your "open mind" represent your ideas about Richard Wright.

Richard Wright wrote about someone that we can all relate to. He's just a regular kid trying to make it in the world.

This kid happens to want to know and learn more, but he knows that white men are imaged as bigger and stronger and negroes and other minorities are small and weak. They are just that, minor. He also knows that him and his boss are unequal not only because his boss is higher on the corporate ladder, but because he's white.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 1 (continued)

5. What were Richard Wright's reactions to the books he read?

When Richard Wright read, he hungered to read even more. He realized his past and what his forefathers did for him. That made him want more for his life and want to move North. Reading made Wright understand.

6. At the end of the story, Richard Wright speculates about the kind of future he will choose to have. What do you think he will choose? Why do you think he will make these choices?

At the end, Richard decides he wants to move North where life will still be hard for him. He will recieve pressures from others as well as himself. By reading however, he will go stranger in his morals and values and not let himself be repressed.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 1 (continued)

7. This is your chance to tell anything else you want about your understanding of this autobiographical selection — what it means to you, what it reminds you of, how it relates to your own life, or whatever else you think is important about this reading selection.

Autobiographies like the one that I just read are important for everyone. Every person needs to understand not only the peope around him but the people before him too. Knowing about people of all differnent races and cultunes helps you to live with eachother and not only tolerate others but love others as well.

We all have a desire to seek and learn other peoples behaviors. We as humains and people on this earth have the responsibility to go out and learn about others and read.

STOP!
This is the end of Section One.

Commentary for Score Point 5 Response - Paper 1

This discerning, thorough, and perceptive reading performance shows a reader who has a clear understanding of the whole text as well as an awareness of how the parts work together to create the whole. This reader demonstrates an active engagement in the process of reading, connecting the text to her own ideas and experience as well as to the larger world.

Beginning with the margin notes, this student demonstrates a wide variety of reading performances. She clusters perceptive comments ("democracy everything human"), fills in gaps ("This person's life was sculpted by the white people around him"), speculates ("I thinks this boy's boss is a white man and has never even tried to relate to this black kid that works for him"), and personally connects to the text ("I wish I had the desire to read as many books as this person dose.") Throughout the margin notes this reader makes plausible assumptions about the text, yet these assertions seem somewhat less insightful than those of an exemplary reading performance.

This reader sees connections between her life and the world of the text. In the initial response activity (Item 1) the reader articulates a personal insight and then connects her understanding to the historical community surrounding the text: "Reading this makes me want to learn more about black history and my history as well." The reader gives a few details to support this historical and cultural connection in Item 4 ("Martin Luther King, Malcolm X"). Additional personal connections are evident in the final response where the reader asserts her ideas about the value of understanding "different races and cultures." While insightful, these comments tend to be more predictable than those of an exemplary performance.

In the graphic and the explanation of it, the reader continues to explore and expand her interpretation of the narrator's life: "Richard Wright wrote about someone that we can all relate to. He's just a regular kid trying to make it in the world. This kid happens to want to know and learn more...." The reader concludes her assessment of the character by speculating that, by reading, Richard "Will go stronger in his morals and values and not let himself be repressed."

Throughout this performance the reader is discerning, thorough, and perceptive, yet the responses are somewhat less insightful than those representing an exemplary performance.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 2

Section One
Reading

Before You Read

You are going to read an excerpt from *Black Boy*, an autobiographical work by African American author Richard Wright. This excerpt takes place in the 1920s, when Wright was 18 years old. He was living in a southern city at a time when Blacks were not allowed to use the public library. In the newspaper he read about a controversial author, H. L. Mencken, and wanted to find out more about him. After considering the various white men he knew from where he worked, Wright approached a man he thought was trustworthy. The man lent Wright a library card, and Wright forged notes requesting books from the library.

Reading Selection

As you read, you may mark up the selection in any way that helps you better understand or remember what you are reading.

Excerpt from
Black Boy
by Richard Wright

That night in my rented room, while letting the hot water run over my can of pork and beans in the sink, I opened *A Book of Prefaces* and began to read. I was jarred and shocked by the style, the clear, clean, sweeping sentences. Why did he write like that? And how did one write like that? I pictured the man as a raging demon, slashing with his pen, consumed with hate, denouncing everything American, extolling everything European or German, laughing at the weaknesses of people, mocking God, authority. What was this? I stood up, trying to realize what reality lay behind the meaning of the words ... Yes, this man was fighting, fighting with words. He was using words as a weapon, using them as one would use a club. Could words be weapons? Well, yes, for here they

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

Agree sometimes words are weapons After all people Are hurt by words they say to one another all the time

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 2 (continued)

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

were. Then, maybe, perhaps, I could use them as a weapon? No. It frightened me. I read on and what amazed me was not what he said, but how on earth anybody had the courage to say it.

Occasionally I glanced up to reassure myself that I was alone in the room. Who were these men about whom Mencken was talking so passionately? Who was Anatole France? Joseph Conrad? Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Dostoevski, George Moore, Gustave Flaubert, Maupassant, Tolstoy, Frank Harris, Mark Twain, Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett, Stephen Crane, Zola, Norris, Gorky, Bergson, Ibsen, Balzac, Bernard Shaw, Dumas, Poe, Thomas Mann, O. Henry, Dreiser, H. G. Wells, Gogol, T. S. Eliot, Gide, Baudelaire, Edgar Lee Masters, Lessing Stendhal, Turgenev, Huneker, Nietzsche, and scores of others? Were these men real? Did they exist or had they existed? And how did one pronounce their names?

I ran across many words whose meanings I did not know, and I either looked them up in a dictionary or, before I had a chance to do that, encountered the word in a context that made its meaning clear. But what strange world was this? I concluded the book with the conviction that I had somehow overlooked something terribly important in life. I had once tried to write, had once reveled in feeling, had let my crude imagination roam, but the impulse to dream had been slowly beaten out of me by experience. Now it surged up again and I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing. It was not a matter of believing or disbelieving what I read, but of feeling something new, of being affected by something that made the look of the world different.

? What

Made a big impression

As dawn broke I ate my pork and beans, feeling dopey, sleepy. I went to work, but the mood of the book would not die; it lingered, coloring everything I saw, heard, did. I now felt that I knew what the white men were feeling. Merely because I had read a book that had spoken of how they lived and thought, I identified myself with that book.

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 2 (continued)

I felt vaguely guilty. Would I, filled with bookish notions, act in a manner that would make the whites dislike me?

I forged more notes and my trips to the library became frequent. Reading grew into a passion. My first serious novel was Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*. It made me see my boss, Mr. Gerald, and identify him as an American type. I would smile when I saw him lugging his gold bags into the office. I had always felt a vast distance separating me from the boss, and now I felt closer to him, though still distant. I felt now that I knew him, that I could feel the very limits of his narrow life. And this had happened because I had read a novel about a mythical man called George F. Babbitt.

The plots and stories in the novels did not interest me so much as the point of view revealed. I gave myself over to each novel without reserve, without trying to criticize it; it was enough for me to see and feel something different. And for me, everything was something different. Reading was like a drug, a dope. The novels created moods in which I lived for days. But I could not conquer my sense of guilt, my feeling that the white men around me knew that I was changing, that I had begun to regard them differently.

Whenever I brought a book to the job, I wrapped it in newspaper — a habit that was to persist for years in other cities and under other circumstances. But some of the white men pried into my packages when I was absent and they questioned me.

"Boy, what are you reading those books for?"

"Oh, I don't know, sir."

"That's deep stuff you're reading, boy."

"I'm just killing time, sir."

"You'll addle your brains if you don't watch out."

I read Dreiser's *Jennie Gerhardt* and *Sister Carrie* and they revived in me a vivid sense of my mother's suffering; I was overwhelmed. I grew silent, wondering about the life around me. It would have been impossible for me to

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

does it matter!

Reading those mentioned in first book

Don't know if you can kn. a person thru books

He was reading for pleasure.

Don't understand the guilt.

Books definetly can teach people and re mind people of them,

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 2 (continued)

have told anyone what I derived from these novels, for it was nothing less than a sense of life itself. All my life had shaped me for the realism, the naturalism of the modern novel, and I could not read enough of them.

Steeped in new moods and ideas, I bought a ream of paper and tried to write; but nothing would come, or what did come was flat beyond telling. I discovered that more than desire and feeling were necessary to write and I dropped the idea. Yet I still wondered how it was possible to know people sufficiently to write about them? Could I ever learn about life and people? To me, with my vast ignorance, my Jim Crow station in life, it seemed a task impossible of achievement. I now knew what being a Negro meant. I could endure the hunger. I had learned to live with hate. But to feel that there were feelings denied me, that the very breath of life itself was beyond my reach, that more than anything else hurt, wounded me. I had a new hunger.

In buoying me up, reading also cast me down, made me see what was possible, what I had missed. My tension returned, new, terrible, bitter, surging, almost too great to be contained. I no longer *felt* that the world about me was hostile, killing; I *knew* it. A million times I asked myself what I could do to save myself, and there were no answers. I seemed forever condemned, ringed by walls.

I did not discuss my reading with Mr. Falk, who had lent me his library card; it would have meant talking about myself and that would have been too painful. I smiled each day, fighting desperately to maintain my old behavior, to keep my disposition seemingly sunny. But some of the white men discerned that I had begun to brood.

"Wake up there, boy!" Mr. Olin said one day.

"Sir!" I answered for the lack of a better word.

"You act like you've stolen something," he said.

I laughed in the way I knew he expected me to laugh, but I resolved to be more conscious of myself, to watch my every act, to guard and hide the new knowledge that was dawning within me.

→ He kind of has Irony

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

Wants to give other people what he has experienced. Eventually he did.

Only after he read the book & not before? I get it, hadn't realized how bad his life was until - these books - he learned how much more there was

→ Awful to have to deal w/ that

I read I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings - recently and said almost the same thing

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 2 (continued)

If I went north, would it be possible for me to build a new life then? But how could a man build a life upon vague, unformed yearnings? I wanted to write and I did not even know the English language. I bought English grammars and found them dull. I felt that I was getting a better sense of the language from novels than from grammars. I read hard, discarding a writer as soon as I felt that I had grasped his point of view. At night the printed page stood before my eyes in sleep.

Mrs. Moss, my landlady, asked me one Sunday morning:

"Son, what is this you keep on reading?"

"Oh, nothing. Just novels."

"What you get out of 'em?"

"I'm just killing time," I said.

"I hope you know your own mind," she said in a tone which implied that she doubted if I had a mind.

I knew of no Negroes who read the books I liked and I wondered if any Negroes ever thought of them. I knew that there were Negro doctors, lawyers, newspapermen, but I never saw any of them. When I read a Negro newspaper I never caught the faintest echo of my preoccupation in its pages. I felt trapped and occasionally, for a few days, I would stop reading. But a vague hunger would come over me for books, books that opened up new avenues of feeling and seeing, and again I would forge another note to the white librarian. Again I would read and wonder as only the naive and unlettered can read and wonder, feeling that I carried a secret, criminal burden about with me each day.

That winter my mother and brother came and we set up housekeeping, buying furniture on the installment plan, being cheated and yet knowing no way to avoid it. I began to eat warm food and to my surprise found that regular meals enabled me to read faster. I may have lived through many illnesses and survived them, never suspecting that I was ill. My brother obtained a job and we began to save toward the trip north, plotting our time, setting tentative

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

True

Also True

Feels like he's alone. And
doing something wrong
at that. But really he
isn't. He doesn't tell
how can he expect
others to

I feel that way if I
don't play violin or
piano for a while

His writing reflects his
new attitude. Before
hadn't written bitterly.

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 2 (continued)

dates for departure. I told none of the white men on the job that I was planning to go north; I knew that the moment they felt I was thinking of the North they would change toward me. It would have made them feel that I did not like the life I was living, and because my life was completely conditioned by what they said or did, it would have been tantamount to challenging them.

I could calculate my chances for life in the South as a Negro fairly clearly now.

I could fight the southern whites by organizing with other Negroes, as my grandfather had done. But I knew that I could never win that way; there were many whites and there were but few blacks. They were strong and we were weak. Outright black rebellion could never win. If I fought openly I would die and I did not want to die. News of lynchings were frequent.

I could submit and live the life of a genial slave, but that was impossible. All of my life had shaped me to live by my own feelings and thought. I could make up to Bess and marry her and inherit the house. But that, too, would be the life of a slave; if I did that, I would crush to death something within me, and I would hate myself as much as I knew the whites already hated those who had submitted. Neither could I ever willingly present myself to be kicked, as Shorty had done. I would rather have died than do that.

I could drain off my restlessness by fighting with Shorty and Harrison. I had seen many Negroes solve the problem of being black by transferring their hatred of themselves to others with a black skin and fighting them. I would have to be cold to do that, and I was not cold and I could never be.

I could, of course, forget what I had read, thrust the whites out of my mind, forget them; and find release from anxiety and longing in sex and alcohol. But the memory of how my father had conducted himself made that course repugnant. If I did not want others to violate my life, how could I voluntarily violate it myself?

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

It always amazes me that those kind of things happened, & still happen. I know but I never realize it or feel it in my everyday life, being a white girl in California

→ Interesting

What a question.

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 2 (continued)

I had no hope whatever of being a professional man. Not only had I been so conditioned that I did not desire it, but the fulfillment of such an ambition was beyond my capabilities. Well-to-do Negroes lived in a world that was almost as alien to me as the world inhabited by whites.

What, then, was there? I held my life in my mind, in my consciousness each day, feeling at times that I would stumble and drop it, spill it forever. My reading had created a vast sense of distance between me and the world in which I lived and tried to make a living, and that sense of distance was increasing each day. My days and nights were one long, quiet, continuously contained dream of terror, tension, and anxiety. I wondered how long I could bear it.

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

He would bear it, what else could he do?

Richard Wright. *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1937, pp. 271-277.

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 2 (continued)

After You Have Read

Now that you have finished reading the selection, respond as fully as you can to the following questions and activities. You may refer to the reading selection as often as you like.

1. What is your response to the excerpt from this autobiography? Take a few minutes to write any thoughts, questions, or opinions you may have.

When I read this excerpt I was amazed by the prejudice that this person had felt. I've always known it was there but I never totally realized it or felt it. I also realized how truely wonderful books can be. They can give so much. I also liked the idea of words as weapons. I think everyone has a way to fight back, and words are definetly a good way. They can make the reader feel as the author did, and in some way understand understand what they went through. That's exactly what happened to him. I also found it interesting that he wanted to write He had gotten so much from books he wanted to give some of that back to other people.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 2 (continued)

2. Choose one of the following quotations from the reading selection to write about. Explain what it might mean in the selection, what it means to you, how you feel about it, or any other comments you may have.

   A. "He was using words as weapons...Could words be weapons?"
   B. "...I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing."

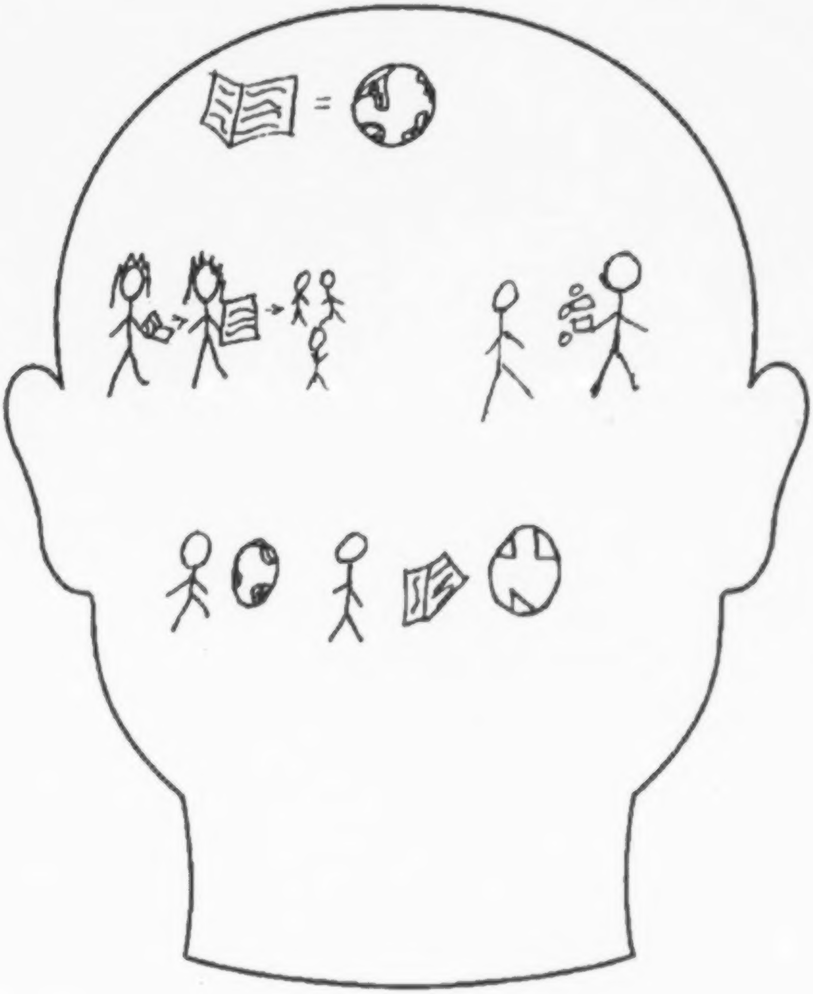
I am writing about the quotation labeled ☐ A ☑ B

I think that in this selection the quote told the reader how books affected the author. He wanted a new perspective and he found it in books. He ended up with a greatly different perspective after he had read the books. Just "looking and seeing" had caused him to realize what he was missing in his life and that made him angry that whites had taken those things from him. I totally agree with this quote that books provide a new way of seeing things. The author points out things we don't ordinarily see. Like for me in this selection, realizing how much hate and prejudice Blacks have to deal with on an everyday basis.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 2 (continued)

3. An "open mind" is an outline of a head that lets you show what a character might be thinking or feeling. In the "open mind" below use symbols, images, drawings, and/or words to show what Richard Wright might have been thinking or feeling in this excerpt from the autobiography.

Open Mind for Richard Wright



Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 2 (continued)

4. Explain how the symbols, images, drawings, and/or words you put into your "open mind" represent your ideas about Richard Wright.

The first symbol/drawing means that people can see the world through books. That was something that Wright learned in this excerpt. The second drawing means that because he got so much from books he wanted to give something back to others. The third drawing means even though he knows he's throwing his money away (the installment-furniture thing) he can't do anything else. The last drawing shows the main point of this excerpt - books can change the way people see the world.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 2 (continued)

5. What were Richard Wright's reactions to the books he read?

He was upset that whites had denied him so much. He hadn't realized what he was missing until he started reading. He also thought he knew more about the people who were around him because of his reading. He also wanted to give something back because he got so much. He also realized that words can be weapons.

6. At the end of the story, Richard Wright speculates about the kind of future he will choose to have. What do you think he will choose? Why do you think he will make these choices?

I think he will move North. I think he'll do that because he wants to find others who will understand the books he reads and the feelings they cause him. It's obvious he will write, he wrote the autobiography, and I think that it is, again, because he wants to touch other people as he has been. I think he will learn from books, the English language that will enable him to write

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 - Paper 2 (continued)

7. This is your chance to tell anything else you want about your understanding of this autobiographical selection — what it means to you, what it reminds you of, how it relates to your own life, or whatever else you think is important about this reading selection.

As I read the part about sometimes he tried to stop reading but felt a "vague hunger", reminded me of when I don't play music for a while. I need to get away, and music let's me do that, just as reading let him escape from his life of hate and prejudice. I also saw that other black people escape from their situations in some of Maya Angelou's books. As a child she escaped through books as well and later through music and dance as well. I think escaping the situation is a universal thing and that helped me to relate to Wright. I also thought books changing the way people was very true. I also thought the point of violating your own life but not letting others do that was interesting. So many people do that.

STOP!

This is the end of Section One.

Commentary for Score Point 5 Response - Paper 2

In this discerning reading performance, the reader clearly shows her understanding of the whole text as well as how the parts work together to create the whole. Beginning in the margin notes this reader shows her ability to use the text to validate her own ideas, saying: "Agree sometimes words are weapons. After all people are hurt by words they say to one another all the time." The reader continues her engagement with the text in the margin notes, using a variety of reading performances. She questions, asking "Does it matter?" and fills in gaps, saying "hadn't realized how bad his life was until — thru books — he learned how much there was." She also connects this story to another piece of literature, "read *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* — recently and said almost the same thing." Many of the notes in the margin are thorough and perceptive, yet they show less acuteness of vision and depth of understanding than those of readers achieving score point 6.

In the initial response activity (Item 1), the reader begins with a newly articulated insight. She is amazed by the prejudice that Richard felt and says "I've always known it was there but I never totally realized it or felt it." The reader also fills in a gap, saying that Richard "had gotten so much from books he wanted to give some of that back to other people." In the second item the reader continues to fill in gaps, making plausible assumptions from subtle clues. "He wanted a new perspective and found it in books ... just 'looking and seeing' had caused him to realize what he was missing in his life...." Although these perceptions are discerning, they are somewhat more predictable than those made by readers achieving score point 6.

The reader continues her interpretation of Richard in the responses to items 3 and 4, yet these are somewhat more predictable than those of an exemplary reading performance. The reader comments that even though Richard "knows he's throwing his money away (the installment-furniture thing) he can't do anything else."

In items 5 and 6 the reader explores some of the emotions Richard went through during this experience. Using the text to expand and validate her ideas, the reader explains that Richard was upset that whites had "denied him so much." The reader also restates her previous idea that Richard "wanted to give something back because he got so much from books." The reader speculates that Richard will move North to find others who will "understand the books he reads and the feelings they cause him."

In her response to the final item, the reader connects personally with the text, explaining that music allows her to escape in the same way that reading let Richard escape from his "life of hate." She also connects Richard's experience to that of Maya Angelou, saying "As a child she escaped through books as well as and later through music and dance as well. I think escaping the situation is a universal thing and that helped me relate to Wright."

Commentary for Score Point 5 Response - Paper 2 (continued)

Throughout this reading performance, the reader demonstrates that she is discerning, thorough, and perceptive, although somewhat less insightful than we would see in an exemplary reading performance. She is able to integrate her own previous reading experiences into this one, using her knowledge about Maya Angelou as a base of expanding the meaning of Wright's text. Even when drawing on her prior knowledge, however, she keeps her interpretation grounded by making frequent references to the text.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4

Section One
Reading

Before You Read

You are going to read an excerpt from *Black Boy*, an autobiographical work by African American author Richard Wright. This excerpt takes place in the 1920s, when Wright was 18 years old. He was living in a southern city at a time when Blacks were not allowed to use the public library. In the newspaper he read about a controversial author, H. L. Mencken, and wanted to find out more about him. After considering the various white men he knew from where he worked, Wright approached a man he thought was trustworthy. The man lent Wright a library card, and Wright forged notes requesting books from the library.

Reading Selection

As you read, you may mark up the selection in any way that helps you better understand or remember what you are reading.

Excerpt from
Black Boy
by Richard Wright

That night in my rented room, while letting the hot water run over my can of pork and beans in the sink, I opened *A Book of Prefaces* and began to read. I was jarred and shocked by the style, the clear, clean, sweeping sentences. Why did he write like that? And how did one write like that? I pictured the man as a raging demon, slashing with his pen, consumed with hate, denouncing everything American, extolling everything European or German, laughing at the weaknesses of people, mocking God, authority. What was this? I stood up, trying to realize what reality lay behind the meaning of the words ... Yes, this man was fighting, fighting with words. He was using words as a weapon, using them as one would use a club. Could words be weapons? Well, yes, for here they

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

What was so shocking about the style?

What was so wrong with writing clearly?

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 (continued)

were. Then, maybe, perhaps, I could use them as a weapon? No. It frightened me. I read on and what amazed me was not what he said, but how on earth anybody had the courage to say it.

Occasionally I glanced up to reassure myself that I was alone in the room. Who were these men about whom Mencken was talking so passionately? Who was Anatole France? Joseph Conrad? Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Dostoevski, George Moore, Gustave Flaubert, Maupassant, Tolstoy, Frank Harris, Mark Twain, Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett, Stephen Crane, Zola, Norris, Gorky, Bergson, Ibsen, Balzac, Bernard Shaw, Dumas, Poe, Thomas Mann, O. Henry, Dreiser, H. G. Wells, Gogol, T. S. Eliot, Gide, Baudelaire, Edgar Lee Masters, Stendhal, Turgenev, Huneker, Nietzsche, and scores of others? Were these men real? Did they exist or had they existed? And how did one pronounce their names?

I ran across many words whose meanings I did not know, and I either looked them up in a dictionary or, before I had a chance to do that, encountered the word in a context that made its meaning clear. But what strange world was this? I concluded the book with the conviction that I had somehow overlooked something terribly important in life. I had once tried to write, had once reveled in feeling, had let my crude imagination roam, but the impulse to dream had been slowly beaten out of me by experience. Now it surged up again and I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing. It was not a matter of believing or disbelieving what I read, but of feeling something new, of being affected by something that made the look of the world different.

As dawn broke I ate my pork and beans, feeling dopey, sleepy. I went to work, but the mood of the book would not die; it lingered, coloring everything I saw, heard, did. I now felt that I knew what the white men were feeling. Merely because I had read a book that had spoken of how they lived and thought, I identified myself with that book.

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading *

Why was he never exposed to all thocse authors?

Were the words forgien or did he just not know them?

What does he mean by that?
Has he really been beaten?

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 (continued)

I felt vaguely guilty. Would I, filled with bookish notions, act in a manner that would make the whites dislike me?

I forged more notes and my trips to the library became frequent. Reading grew into a passion. My first serious novel was Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*. It made me see my boss, Mr. Gerald, and identify him as an American type. I would smile when I saw him lugging his gold bags into the office. I had always felt a vast distance separating me from the boss, and now I felt closer to him, though still distant. I felt now that I knew him, that I could feel the very limits of his narrow life. And this had happened because I had read a novel about a mythical man called George F. Babbitt.

The plots and stories in the novels did not interest me so much as the point of view revealed. I gave myself over to each novel without reserve, without trying to criticize it; it was enough for me to see and feel something different. And for me, everything was something different. Reading was like a drug, a dope. The novels created moods in which I lived for days. But I could not conquer my sense of guilt, my feeling that the white men around me knew that I was changing, that I had begun to regard them differently.

Whenever I brought a book to the job, I wrapped it in newspaper — a habit that was to persist for years in other cities and under other circumstances. But some of the white men pried into my packages when I was absent and they questioned me.

"Boy, what are you reading those books for?"

"Oh, I don't know, sir."

"That's deep stuff you're reading, boy."

"I'm just killing time, sir."

"You'll addle your brains if you don't watch out."

I read Dreiser's *Jennie Gerhardt* and *Sister Carrie* and they revived in me a vivid sense of my mother's suffering; I was overwhelmed. I grew silent, wondering about the life around me. It would have been impossible for me to

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

Why would he feel guilty? for gaining knowledge?
One of the authors he never heard of
cultural growth

Why would he criticize something that gave him knowledge?

Was he disrepecting them? or stepping out of line? (for those times)

Why didn't they want him to read?
Were they afraid?
Was he cruel to her?

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 (continued)

have told anyone what I derived from these novels, for it was nothing less than a sense of life itself. All my life had shaped me for the realism, the naturalism of the modern novel, and I could not read enough of them.

Steeped in new moods and ideas, I bought a ream of paper and tried to write; but nothing would come, or what did come was flat beyond telling. I discovered that more than desire and feeling were necessary to write and I dropped the idea. Yet I still wondered how it was possible to know people sufficiently to write about them? Could I ever learn about life and people? To me, with my vast ignorance, my Jim Crow station in life, it seemed a task impossible of achievement. I now knew what being a Negro meant. I could endure the hunger. I had learned to live with hate. But to feel that there were feelings denied me, that the very breath of life itself was beyond my reach, that more than anything else hurt, wounded me. I had a new hunger.

In buoying me up, reading also cast me down, made me see what was possible, what I had missed. My tension returned, new, terrible, bitter, surging, almost too great to be contained. I no longer *felt* that the world about me was hostile, killing; I *knew* it. A million times I asked myself what I could do to save myself, and there were no answers. I seemed forever condemned, ringed by walls.

I did not discuss my reading with Mr. Falk, who had lent me his library card; it would have meant talking about myself and that would have been too painful. I smiled each day, fighting desperately to maintain my old behavior, to keep my disposition seemingly sunny. But some of the white men discerned that I had begun to brood.

"Wake up there, boy!" Mr. Olin said one day.

"Sir!" I answered for the lack of a better word.

"You act like you've stolen something," he said.

I laughed in the way I knew he expected me to laugh, but I resolved to be more conscious of myself, to watch my every act, to guard and hide the new knowledge that was dawning within me.

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading *

Why did he stop trying?

What is a JimCrow station?

What type of feelings were denied?

The times were bad, but the majority of people were evil.

Was he afraid that the men would beat him?

Did mr. olin think he stole something?

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 (continued)

If I went north, would it be possible for me to build a new life then? But how could a man build a life upon vague, unformed yearnings? I wanted to write and I did not even know the English language. I bought English grammars and found them dull. I felt that I was getting a better sense of the language from novels than from grammars. I read hard, discarding a writer as soon as I felt that I had grasped his point of view. At night the printed page stood before my eyes in sleep.

Mrs. Moss, my landlady, asked me one Sunday morning:

"Son, what is this you keep on reading?"

"Oh, nothing. Just novels."

"What you get out of 'em?"

"I'm just killing time," I said.

"I hope you know your own mind," she said in a tone which implied that she doubted if I had a mind.

I knew of no Negroes who read the books I liked and I wondered if any Negroes ever thought of them. I knew that there were Negro doctors, lawyers, newspapermen, but I never saw any of them. When I read a Negro newspaper I never caught the faintest echo of my preoccupation in its pages. I felt trapped and occasionally, for a few days, I would stop reading. But a vague hunger would come over me for books, books that opened up new avenues of feeling and seeing, and again I would forge another note to the white librarian. Again I would read and wonder as only the naive and unlettered can read and wonder, feeling that I carried a secret, criminal burden about with me each day.

That winter my mother and brother came and we set up housekeeping, buying furniture on the installment plan, being cheated and yet knowing no way to avoid it. I began to eat warm food and to my surprise found that regular meals enabled me to read faster. I may have lived through many illnesses and survived them, never suspecting that I was ill. My brother obtained a job and we began to save toward the trip north, plotting our time, setting tentative

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

what language did he know?
Why were English grammars so dull?

Why did she think that way?
Was she white?

Why did he forge the note and not have the owner do it for him?

Was it better in the north?

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 (continued)

dates for departure. I told none of the white men on the job that I was planning to go north; I knew that the moment they felt I was thinking of the North they would change toward me. It would have made them feel that I did not like the life I was living, and because my life was completely conditioned by what they said or did, it would have been tantamount to challenging them.

I could calculate my chances for life in the South as a Negro fairly clearly now.

I could fight the southern whites by organizing with other Negroes, as my grandfather had done. But I knew that I could never win that way; there were many whites and there were but few blacks. They were strong and we were weak. Outright black rebellion could never win. If I fought openly I would die and I did not want to die. News of lynchings were frequent.

I could submit and live the life of a genial slave, but that was impossible. All of my life had shaped me to live by my own feelings and thought. I could make up to Bess and marry her and inherit the house. But that, too, would be the life of a slave; if I did that, I would crush to death something within me, and I would hate myself as much as I knew the whites already hated those who had submitted. Neither could I ever willingly present myself to be kicked, as Shorty had done. I would rather have died than do that.

I could drain off my restlessness by fighting with Shorty and Harrison. I had seen many Negroes solve the problem of being black by transferring their hatred of themselves to others with a black skin and fighting them. I would have to be cold to do that, and I was not cold and I could never be.

I could, of course, forget what I had read, thrust the whites out of my mind, forget them; and find release from anxiety and longing in sex and alcohol. But the memory of how my father had conducted himself made that course repugnant. If I did not want others to violate my life, how could I voluntarily violate it myself?

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

Why would they change toward him?

what does tantamount mean?

Why were lynchings frequent? Were the whites afraid?

Why did Shorty do that?

this happened with many people except whites.

Was his father a drunk?

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 (continued)

I had no hope whatever of being a professional man. Not only had I been so conditioned that I did not desire it, but the fulfillment of such an ambition was beyond my capabilities. Well-to-do Negroes lived in a world that was almost as alien to me as the world inhabited by whites.

What, then, was there? I held my life in my mind, in my consciousness each day, feeling at times that I would stumble and drop it, spill it forever. My reading had created a vast sense of distance between me and the world in which I lived and tried to make a living, and that sense of distance was increasing each day. My days and nights were one long, quiet, continuously contained dream of terror, tension, and anxiety. I wondered how long I could bear it.

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

Why didn't he try to change it?

Richard Wright. *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1937, pp. 271-277.

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 (continued)

After You Have Read

Now that you have finished reading the selection, respond as fully as you can to the following questions and activities. You may refer to the reading selection as often as you like.

1. What is your response to the excerpt from this autobiography? Take a few minutes to write any thoughts, questions, or opinions you may have.

I think that the author of this story was very brave to write everything that he felt about starting to read and wanting to change his life. Whatever happened to the author? Did he and his family ever move North?

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 (continued)

2. Choose one of the following quotations from the reading selection to write about. Explain what it might mean in the selection, what it means to you, how you feel about it, or any other comments you may have.

   A. "He was using words as weapons...Could words be weapons?"
   B. "...I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing."

I am writing about the quotation labeled ☑ A ☐ B

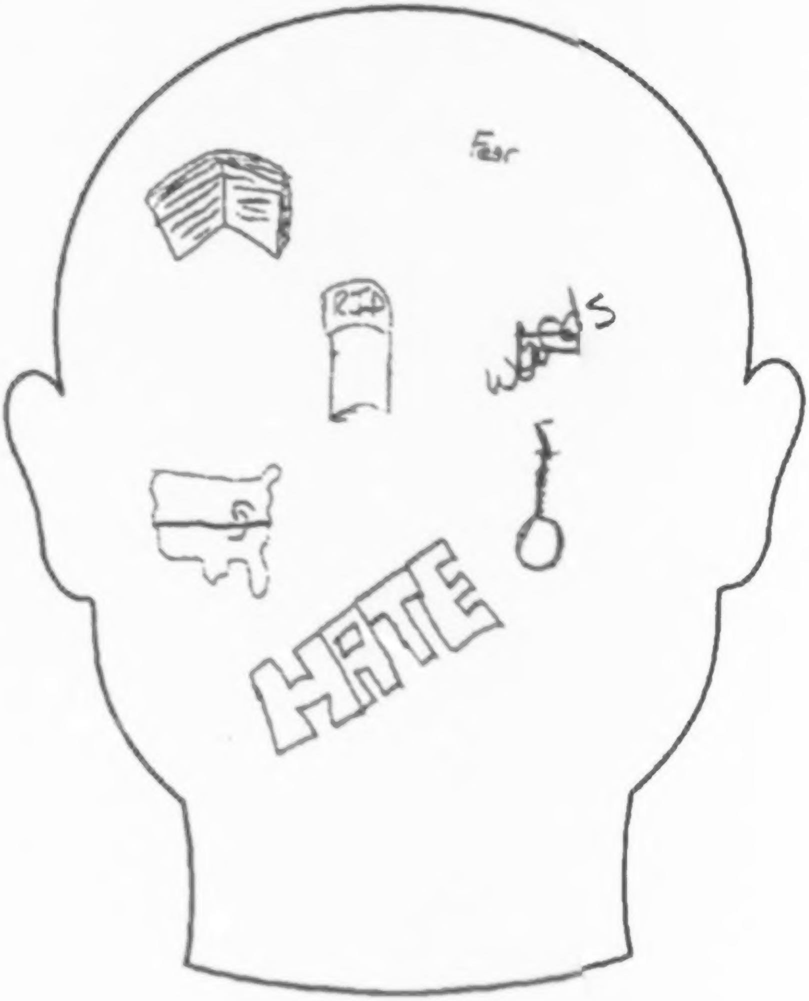
I think that words are the strongest weapons that we can use This quotation meant that the author of the book he was reading was trying to tell people things that they didn't want to hear, so that he was hurting them because he made them think about what they were doing. The other part of the quotation was the author wondering if a lot of people were really getting alarmed or hurt by the words that man wrote.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 (continued)

3. An "open mind" is an outline of a head that lets you show what a character might be thinking or feeling. In the "open mind" below use symbols, images, drawings, and/or words to show what Richard Wright might have been thinking or feeling in this excerpt from the autobiography.

Open Mind for Richard Wright



Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 (continued)

4. Explain how the symbols, images, drawings, and/or words you put into your "open mind" represent your ideas about Richard Wright.

The small word-fear was to represent all the fear that Richard Wright had and how small it made him feel

The open book was to represent the knowledge he was gaining

The tombstone and grave to represent all the deaths that took place.

The word-words over the gun was to symbolize that words are weapons too.

The nuse was to represent all the lynchings

The picture of the U.S with a dividing line was to symbolize his want to be on the other side

The large word-hate was to represent all the hate he felt and all the hate over his race.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 (continued)

5. What were Richard Wright's reactions to the books he read?

Every book he read gave him more knowledge and made his ideas grow. The first book he had a different opinion of, at first, because he didn't think that anybody was supposed to write like that. The other books he loved because they made him think of people differently

6. At the end of the story, Richard Wright speculates about the kind of future he will choose to have. What do you think he will choose? Why do you think he will make these choices?

At the end of the story I thought that he was going to kill himself. I think he choose to go north so that he could start over and have more freedom to do all the things that he wants to do.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 (continued)

7. This is your chance to tell anything else you want about your understanding of this autobiographical selection — what it means to you, what it reminds you of, how it relates to your own life, or whatever else you think is important about this reading selection.

I think everybody in the world needs to read this story because it would give them the chance to understand people a little better It would let people understand all the problems that the minorities go through in their country. This story made me understand all the hate that the African American went through.

STOP!
This is the end of Section One.

Commentary for Score Point 4 Response

Readers performing at score point 4 construct a thoughtful and plausible interpretation of the whole text. This reader's use of literal questions in the margins shows his engagement with the text, as in "What is a Jim Crow Station?… Did Mr.. Olin think he stole something?… Was his father a drunk?" However, some of this reader's margin notes reveal evidence of more thoughtful questioning, as in, "Why didn't they want him to read? Were they afraid? … Why didn't he try to change it (his life)?" This reader is clearly engaged with the text, and the margin notes give us clear evidence of this reader's thoughtful understanding.

In response to Item 1 the reader expresses his ideas about the text, saying, "the author of this story was very brave to write everything that he felt about starting to read and wanting to change his life." The reader has made an interesting but predictable response, characteristic of the thoughtful score point 4 performance.

In response to items 3 and 4, the reader speculates about Richard Wright's thoughts, saying: "The small word - fear was to represent all the fear that Richard Wright had an how small it made him feel…. The picture of the U.S. with a dividing line was to symbolize his want to be on the other side." In response to Item 5 the reader says, "The other books he loved because they made him think of people differently." Clearly this reader is able to go beyond the literal facts of the text, filling in some gaps; yet his insights lack the depth of a score point 5 or 6 response and his understanding of the text remains fixed.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3

Section One
Reading

Before You Read

You are going to read an excerpt from *Black Boy*, an autobiographical work by African American author Richard Wright. This excerpt takes place in the 1920s, when Wright was 18 years old. He was living in a southern city at a time when Blacks were not allowed to use the public library. In the newspaper he read about a controversial author, H. L. Mencken, and wanted to find out more about him. After considering the various white men he knew from where he worked, Wright approached a man he thought was trustworthy. The man lent Wright a library card, and Wright forged notes requesting books from the library.

Reading Selection

As you read, you may mark up the selection in any way that helps you better understand or remember what you are reading.

Excerpt from
Black Boy
by Richard Wright

That night in my rented room, while letting the hot water run over my can of pork and beans in the sink, I opened *A Book of Prefaces* and began to read. I was jarred and shocked by the style, the clear, clean, sweeping sentences. Why did he write like that? And how did one write like that? I pictured the man as a raging demon, slashing with his pen, consumed with hate, denouncing everything American, extolling everything European or German, laughing at the weaknesses of people, mocking God, authority. What was this? I stood up, trying to realize what reality lay behind the meaning of the words ... Yes, this man was fighting, fighting with words. He was using words as a weapon, using them as one would use a club. Could words be weapons? Well, yes, for here they

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

I think he is reading a book written by a very mean person He is very prejudce and is making for of every thing but himself.

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 (continued)

were. Then, maybe, perhaps, I could use them as a weapon? No. It frightened me. I read on and what amazed me was not what he said, but how on earth anybody had the courage to say it.

Occasionally I glanced up to reassure myself that I was alone in the room. Who were these men about whom Mencken was talking so passionately? Who was Anatole France? Joseph Conrad? Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Dostoevski, George Moore, Gustave Flaubert, Maupassant, Tolstoy, Frank Harris, Mark Twain, Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett, Stephen Crane, Zola, Norris, Gorky, Bergson, Ibsen, Balzac, Bernard Shaw, Dumas, Poe, Thomas Mann, O. Henry, Dreiser, H. G. Wells, Gogol, T. S. Eliot, Gide, Baudelaire, Edgar Lee Masters, Stendhal, Turgenev, Huneker, Nietzsche, and scores of others? Were these men real? Did they exist or had they existed? And how did one pronounce their names?

I ran across many words whose meanings I did not know, and I either looked them up in a dictionary or, before I had a chance to do that, encountered the word in a context that made its meaning clear. But what strange world was this? I concluded the book with the conviction that I had somehow overlooked something terribly important in life. I had once tried to write, had once reveled in feeling, had let my crude imagination roam, but the impulse to dream had been slowly beaten out of me by experience. Now it surged up again and I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing. It was not a matter of believing or disbelieving what I read, but of feeling something new, of being affected by something that made the look of the world different.

As dawn broke I ate my pork and beans, feeling dopey, sleepy. I went to work, but the mood of the book would not die; it lingered, coloring everything I saw, heard, did. I now felt that I knew what the white men were feeling. Merely because I had read a book that had spoken of how they lived and thought, I identified myself with that book.

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading *

I think that the author of the book is a very good writer. He writes down exactly what he thinks. He puts his imagination into his books.

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 (continued)

I felt vaguely guilty. Would I, filled with bookish notions, act in a manner that would make the whites dislike me?

I forged more notes and my trips to the library became frequent. Reading grew into a passion. My first serious novel was Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*. It made me see my boss, Mr. Gerald, and identify him as an American type. I would smile when I saw him lugging his gold bags into the office. I had always felt a vast distance separating me from the boss, and now I felt closer to him, though still distant. I felt now that I knew him, that I could feel the very limits of his narrow life. And this had happened because I had read a novel about a mythical man called George F. Babbitt.

The plots and stories in the novels did not interest me so much as the point of view revealed. I gave myself over to each novel without reserve, without trying to criticize it; it was enough for me to see and feel something different. And for me, everything was something different. Reading was like a drug, a dope. The novels created moods in which I lived for days. But I could not conquer my sense of guilt, my feeling that the white men around me knew that I was changing, that I had begun to regard them differently.

Whenever I brought a book to the job, I wrapped it in newspaper — a habit that was to persist for years in other cities and under other circumstances. But some of the white men pried into my packages when I was absent and they questioned me.

"Boy, what are you reading those books for?"

"Oh, I don't know, sir."

"That's deep stuff you're reading, boy."

"I'm just killing time, sir."

"You'll addle your brains if you don't watch out."

I read Dreiser's *Jennie Gerhardt* and *Sister Carrie* and they revived in me a vivid sense of my mother's suffering; I was overwhelmed. I grew silent, wondering about the life around me. It would have been impossible for me to

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

He is starting to feel closer to his boss and started to regard some of the other white men differently. He didn't want the white men to know he was reading. They found out and told him to stop.

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 (continued)

have told anyone what I derived from these novels, for it was nothing less than a sense of life itself. All my life had shaped me for the realism, the naturalism of the modern novel, and I could not read enough of them.

Steeped in new moods and ideas, I bought a ream of paper and tried to write; but nothing would come, or what did come was flat beyond telling. I discovered that more than desire and feeling were necessary to write and I dropped the idea. Yet I still wondered how it was possible to know people sufficiently to write about them? Could I ever learn about life and people? To me, with my vast ignorance, my Jim Crow station in life, it seemed a task impossible of achievement. I now knew what being a Negro meant. I could endure the hunger. I had learned to live with hate. But to feel that there were feelings denied me, that the very breath of life itself was beyond my reach, that more than anything else hurt, wounded me. I had a new hunger.

In buoying me up, reading also cast me down, made me see what was possible, what I had missed. My tension returned, new, terrible, bitter, surging, almost too great to be contained. I no longer *felt* that the world about me was hostile, killing; I *knew* it. A million times I asked myself what I could do to save myself, and there were no answers. I seemed forever condemned, ringed by walls.

I did not discuss my reading with Mr. Falk, who had lent me his library card; it would have meant talking about myself and that would have been too painful. I smiled each day, fighting desperately to maintain my old behavior, to keep my disposition seemingly sunny. But some of the white men discerned that I had begun to brood.

"Wake up there, boy!" Mr. Olin said one day.

"Sir!" I answered for the lack of a better word.

"You act like you've stolen something," he said.

I laughed in the way I knew he expected me to laugh, but I resolved to be more conscious of myself, to watch my every act, to guard and hide the new knowledge that was dawning within me.

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

He was beginning to become adicted to reading novels. He tried to write a book but he didn't have any ideas. He now knows the world is full of hostility and killing.

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 (continued)

If I went north, would it be possible for me to build a new life then? But how could a man build a life upon vague, unformed yearnings? I wanted to write and I did not even know the English language. I bought English grammars and found them dull. I felt that I was getting a better sense of the language from novels than from grammars. I read hard, discarding a writer as soon as I felt that I had grasped his point of view. At night the printed page stood before my eyes in sleep.

Mrs. Moss, my landlady, asked me one Sunday morning:

"Son, what is this you keep on reading?"

"Oh, nothing. Just novels."

"What you get out of 'em?"

"I'm just killing time," I said.

"I hope you know your own mind," she said in a tone which implied that she doubted if I had a mind.

I knew of no Negroes who read the books I liked and I wondered if any Negroes ever thought of them. I knew that there were Negro doctors, lawyers, newspapermen, but I never saw any of them. When I read a Negro newspaper I never caught the faintest echo of my preoccupation in its pages. I felt trapped and occasionally, for a few days, I would stop reading. But a vague hunger would come over me for books, books that opened up new avenues of feeling and seeing, and again I would forge another note to the white librarian. Again I would read and wonder as only the naive and unlettered can read and wonder, feeling that I carried a secret, criminal burden about with me each day.

That winter my mother and brother came and we set up housekeeping, buying furniture on the installment plan, being cheated and yet knowing no way to avoid it. I began to eat warm food and to my surprise found that regular meals enabled me to read faster. I may have lived through many illnesses and survived them, never suspecting that I was ill. My brother obtained a job and we began to save toward the trip north, plotting our time, setting tentative

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

He doesn't know of any other negroes that like the kinds of books he likes. They began saving money so they can make a trip north. He thinks he can start a new life there and write books

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 (continued)

dates for departure. I told none of the white men on the job that I was planning to go north; I knew that the moment they felt I was thinking of the North they would change toward me. It would have made them feel that I did not like the life I was living, and because my life was completely conditioned by what they said or did, it would have been tantamount to challenging them.

I could calculate my chances for life in the South as a Negro fairly clearly now.

I could fight the southern whites by organizing with other Negroes, as my grandfather had done. But I knew that I could never win that way; there were many whites and there were but few blacks. They were strong and we were weak. Outright black rebellion could never win. If I fought openly I would die and I did not want to die. News of lynchings were frequent.

I could submit and live the life of a genial slave, but that was impossible. All of my life had shaped me to live by my own feelings and thought. I could make up to Bess and marry her and inherit the house. But that, too, would be the life of a slave; if I did that, I would crush to death something within me, and I would hate myself as much as I knew the whites already hated those who had submitted. Neither could I ever willingly present myself to be kicked, as Shorty had done. I would rather have died than do that.

I could drain off my restlessness by fighting with Shorty and Harrison. I had seen many Negroes solve the problem of being black by transferring their hatred of themselves to others with a black skin and fighting them. I would have to be cold to do that, and I was not cold and I could never be.

I could, of course, forget what I had read, thrust the whites out of my mind, forget them; and find release from anxiety and longing in sex and alcohol. But the memory of how my father had conducted himself made that course repugnant. If I did not want others to violate my life, how could I voluntarily violate it myself?

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

He told no white men he was going north because then They would hate him. He was thinking of rebelling agains- the white men. But he didn't want to die. He hates the way negroes are mistreated and wants to change it.

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 (continued)

I had no hope whatever of being a professional man. Not only had I been so conditioned that I did not desire it, but the fulfillment of such an ambition was beyond my capabilities. Well-to-do Negroes lived in a world that was almost as alien to me as the world inhabited by whites.

What, then, was there? I held my life in my mind, in my consciousness each day, feeling at times that I would stumble and drop it, spill it forever. My reading had created a vast sense of distance between me and the world in which I lived and tried to make a living, and that sense of distance was increasing each day. My days and nights were one long, quiet, continuously contained dream of terror, tension, and anxiety. I wondered how long I could bear it.

Richard Wright. *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1937, pp. 271-277.

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

He says he has no hope of beng a professional man. I think that he is going to go crazy from all of the tension on his back.

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 (continued)

After You Have Read

Now that you have finished reading the selection, respond as fully as you can to the following questions and activities. You may refer to the reading selection as often as you like.

1. What is your response to the excerpt from this autobiography? Take a few minutes to write any thoughts, questions, or opinions you may have.

I think that the negro really loves to read books and dreams of writing them someday. He thinks that the negroes are being mistreated and wants to rebel against them. I think he should move North and write novels and try to start a new life. I don't think he should have been so scared of the white men finding out about his reading books because he's not doing anything wrong.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 (continued)

2. Choose one of the following quotations from the reading selection to write about. Explain what it might mean in the selection, what it means to you, how you feel about it, or any other comments you may have.

A. "He was using words as weapons… Could words be weapons?"
B. "… I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing."

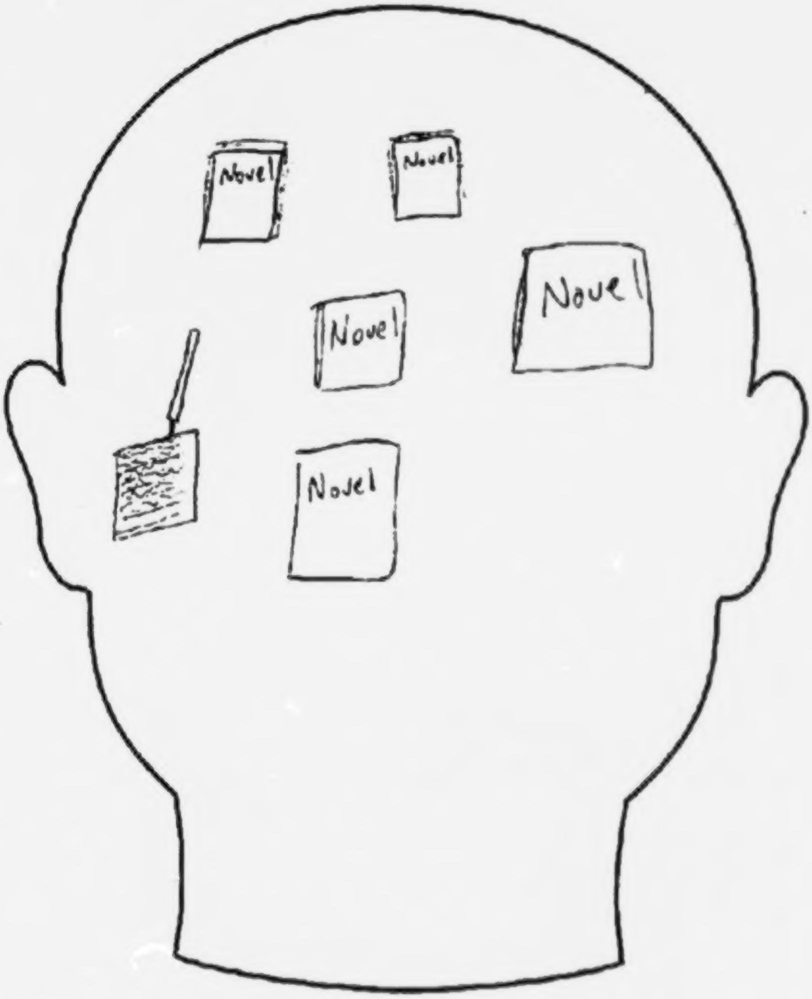
I am writing about the quotation labeled ☑ A ☐ B

Yes words can be weopons when they are used a certain way. When you talk about a person or a certain race of people that is using words as weopons. I think It is very mean to use words as weopons because sometimes they can hurt just as much as real ones. The hurt because they hurt you inside and not outside.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 (continued)

3. An "open mind" is an outline of a head that lets you show what a character might be thinking or feeling. In the "open mind" below use symbols, images, drawings, and/or words to show what Richard Wright might have been thinking or feeling in this excerpt from the autobiography.

Open Mind for Richard Wright



Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 (continued)

4. Explain how the symbols, images, drawings, and/or words you put into your "open mind" represent your ideas about Richard Wright.

Richard Wright is only thinking about reading and writing novels That is what he really loves to do.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 (continued)

5. What were Richard Wright's reactions to the books he read?

Some of them made him feel good and some of them mad him feel bad and think the world was full of killing

6. At the end of the story, Richard Wright speculates about the kind of future he will choose to have. What do you think he will choose? Why do you think he will make these choices?

I think he will move to the North and write many really good books. I think he'll do that because thats the right thing to do.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 (continued)

7. This is your chance to tell anything else you want about your understanding of this autobiographical selection — what it means to you, what it reminds you of, how it relates to your own life, or whatever else you think is important about this reading selection.

I liked the autobiograpny selection a lot dnd I love to read really long books and hope to write them one day.

STOP!
This is the end of Section One.

Commentary for Score Point 3 Response

Readers performing at score point 3 construct literal, superficial interpretations of the text. This reader's margin notes are largely just that — literal and superficial renderings, opinions, and evaluations: "I think he is reading a book written by a very mean person … He writes down exactly what he thinks… started to regard some of the other white men differently… tried to write a book … began saving money…. Although these notes parallel the movement of the text, they show little sensitivity to the nuances and complexities that more proficient readers see in this text.

Occasionally this reader expresses a personal opinion that indicates that he is confident in his understanding, such as "I think that he is going crazy from all the tension on his back" or "I don't think he should have been so scared of the white men finding out about his reading books because he's not doing anything wrong." Although these opinions show some engagement with the text, they are largely superficial and unelaborated, showing little awareness of textual complexities.

This reader expressed his own connection to the text by saying "I like the autobiography selection a lot and I love to read really long books and hope to write them one day." This comment, along with the whole of the reader's responses, point to a reader who likes to read, who understands this text on a literal level, but who has not, in this assessment, demonstrated more than a superficial understanding of the passage. Once he expressed a literal interpretation, he was content to retain this simplistic view without extending or expanding it, as is warranted by Wright's text.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2

Section One
Reading

Before You Read

You are going to read an excerpt from *Black Boy*, an autobiographical work by African American author Richard Wright. This excerpt takes place in the 1920s, when Wright was 18 years old. He was living in a southern city at a time when Blacks were not allowed to use the public library. In the newspaper he read about a controversial author, H. L. Mencken, and wanted to find out more about him. After considering the various white men he knew from where he worked, Wright approached a man he thought was trustworthy. The man lent Wright a library card, and Wright forged notes requesting books from the library.

Reading Selection

As you read, you may mark up the selection in any way that helps you better understand or remember what you are reading.

Excerpt from
Black Boy
by Richard Wright

That night in my rented room, while letting the hot water run over my can of pork and beans in the sink, I opened *A Book of Prefaces* and began to read. I was jarred and shocked by the style, the clear, clean, sweeping sentences. Why did he write like that? And how did one write like that? I pictured the man as a raging demon, slashing with his pen, consumed with hate, denouncing everything American, extolling everything European or German, laughing at the weaknesses of people, mocking God, authority. What was this? I stood up, trying to realize what reality lay behind the meaning of the words ... Yes, this man was fighting, fighting with words. He was using words as a weapon, using them as one would use a club. Could words be weapons? Well, yes, for here they

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

raging demon

weapons

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2 (continued)

were. Then, maybe, perhaps, I could use them as a weapon? No. It frightened me. I read on and what amazed me was not what he said, but how on earth anybody had the courage to say it.

Occasionally I glanced up to reassure myself that I was alone in the room. Who were these men about whom Mencken was talking so passionately? Who was Anatole France? Joseph Conrad? Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Dostoevski, George Moore, Gustave Flaubert, Maupassant, Tolstoy, Frank Harris, Mark Twain, Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett, Stephen Crane, Zola, Norris, Gorky, Bergson, Ibsen, Balzac, Bernard Shaw, Dumas, Poe, Thomas Mann, O. Henry, Dreiser, H. G. Wells, Gogol, T. S. Eliot, Gide, Baudelaire, Edgar Lee Masters, Stendhal, Turgenev, Huneker, Nietzsche, and scores of others? Were these men real? Did they exist or had they existed? And how did one pronounce their names?

I ran across many words whose meanings I did not know, and I either looked them up in a dictionary or, before I had a chance to do that, encountered the word in a context that made its meaning clear. But what strange world was this? I concluded the book with the conviction that I had somehow overlooked something terribly important in life. I had once tried to write, had once reveled in feeling, had let my crude imagination roam, but the impulse to dream had been slowly beaten out of me by experience. Now it surged up again and I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing. It was not a matter of believing or disbelieving what I read, but of feeling something new, of being affected by something that made the look of the world different.

As dawn broke I ate my pork and beans, feeling dopey, sleepy. I went to work, but the mood of the book would not die; it lingered, coloring everything I saw, heard, did. I now felt that I knew what the white men were feeling. Merely because I had read a book that had spoken of how they lived and thought, I identified myself with that book.

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2 (continued)

I felt vaguely guilty. Would I, filled with bookish notions, act in a manner that would make the whites dislike me?

I forged more notes and my trips to the library became frequent. Reading grew into a passion. My first serious novel was Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*. It made me see my boss, Mr. Gerald, and identify him as an American type. I would smile when I saw him lugging his gold bags into the office. I had always felt a vast distance separating me from the boss, and now I felt closer to him, though still distant. I felt now that I knew him, that I could feel the very limits of his narrow life. And this had happened because I had read a novel about a mythical man called George F. Babbitt.

The plots and stories in the novels did not interest me so much as the point of view revealed. I gave myself over to each novel without reserve, without trying to criticize it; it was enough for me to see and feel something different. And for me, everything was something different. Reading was like a drug, a dope. The novels created moods in which I lived for days. But I could not conquer my sense of guilt, my feeling that the white men around me knew that I was changing, that I had begun to regard them differently.

Whenever I brought a book to the job, I wrapped it in newspaper — a habit that was to persist for years in other cities and under other circumstances. But some of the white men pried into my packages when I was absent and they questioned me.

"Boy, what are you reading those books for?"

"Oh, I don't know, sir."

"That's deep stuff you're reading, boy."

"I'm just killing time, sir."

"You'll addle your brains if you don't watch out."

I read Dreiser's *Jennie Gerhardt* and *Sister Carrie* and they revived in me a vivid sense of my mother's suffering; I was overwhelmed. I grew silent, wondering about the life around me. It would have been impossible for me to

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2 (continued)

have told anyone what I derived from these novels, for it was nothing less than a sense of life itself. All my life had shaped me for the realism, the naturalism of the modern novel, and I could not read enough of them.

Steeped in new moods and ideas, I bought a ream of paper and tried to write; but nothing would come, or what did come was flat beyond telling. I discovered that more than desire and feeling were necessary to write and I dropped the idea. Yet I still wondered how it was possible to know people sufficiently to write about them? Could I ever learn about life and people? To me, with my vast ignorance, my Jim Crow station in life, it seemed a task impossible of achievement. I now knew what being a Negro meant. I could endure the hunger. I had learned to live with hate. But to feel that there were feelings denied me, that the very breath of life itself was beyond my reach, that more than anything else hurt, wounded me. I had a new hunger.

In buoying me up, reading also cast me down, made me see what was possible, what I had missed. My tension returned, new, terrible, bitter, surging, almost too great to be contained. I no longer *felt* that the world about me was hostile, killing; I *knew* it. A million times I asked myself what I could do to save myself, and there were no answers. I seemed forever condemned, ringed by walls.

I did not discuss my reading with Mr. Falk, who had lent me his library card; it would have meant talking about myself and that would have been too painful. I smiled each day, fighting desperately to maintain my old behavior, to keep my disposition seemingly sunny. But some of the white men discerned that I had begun to brood.

"Wake up there, boy!" Mr. Olin said one day.

"Sir!" I answered for the lack of a better word.

"You act like you've stolen something," he said.

I laughed in the way I knew he expected me to laugh, but I resolved to be more conscious of myself, to watch my every act, to guard and hide the new knowledge that was dawning within me.

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2 (continued)

If I went north, would it be possible for me to build a new life then? But how could a man build a life upon vague, unformed yearnings? I wanted to write and I did not even know the English language. I bought English grammars and found them dull. I felt that I was getting a better sense of the language from novels than from grammars. I read hard, discarding a writer as soon as I felt that I had grasped his point of view. At night the printed page stood before my eyes in sleep.

Mrs. Moss, my landlady, asked me one Sunday morning:

"Son, what is this you keep on reading?"

"Oh, nothing. Just novels."

"What you get out of 'em?"

"I'm just killing time," I said.

"I hope you know your own mind," she said in a tone which implied that she doubted if I had a mind.

I knew of no Negroes who read the books I liked and I wondered if any Negroes ever thought of them. I knew that there were Negro doctors, lawyers, newspapermen, but I never saw any of them. When I read a Negro newspaper I never caught the faintest echo of my preoccupation in its pages. I felt trapped and occasionally, for a few days, I would stop reading. But a vague hunger would come over me for books, books that opened up new avenues of feeling and seeing, and again I would forge another note to the white librarian. Again I would read and wonder as only the naive and unlettered can read and wonder, feeling that I carried a secret, criminal burden about with me each day.

That winter my mother and brother came and we set up housekeeping, buying furniture on the installment plan, being cheated and yet knowing no way to avoid it. I began to eat warm food and to my surprise found that regular meals enabled me to read faster. I may have lived through many illnesses and survived them, never suspecting that I was ill. My brother obtained a job and we began to save toward the trip north, plotting our time, setting tentative

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2 (continued)

dates for departure. I told none of the white men on the job that I was planning to go north; I knew that the moment they felt I was thinking of the North they would change toward me. It would have made them feel that I did not like the life I was living, and because my life was completely conditioned by what they said or did, it would have been tantamount to challenging them.

I could calculate my chances for life in the South as a Negro fairly clearly now.

I could fight the southern whites by organizing with other Negroes, as my grandfather had done. But I knew that I could never win that way; there were many whites and there were but few blacks. They were strong and we were weak. Outright black rebellion could never win. If I fought openly I would die and I did not want to die. News of lynchings were frequent.

I could submit and live the life of a genial slave, but that was impossible. All of my life had shaped me to live by my own feelings and thought. I could make up to Bess and marry her and inherit the house. But that, too, would be the life of a slave; if I did that, I would crush to death something within me, and I would hate myself as much as I knew the whites already hated those who had submitted. Neither could I ever willingly present myself to be kicked, as Shorty had done. I would rather have died than do that.

I could drain off my restlessness by fighting with Shorty and Harrison. I had seen many Negroes solve the problem of being black by transferring their hatred of themselves to others with a black skin and fighting them. I would have to be cold to do that, and I was not cold and I could never be.

I could, of course, forget what I had read, thrust the whites out of my mind, forget them; and find release from anxiety and longing in sex and alcohol. But the memory of how my father had conducted himself made that course repugnant. If I did not want others to violate my life, how could I voluntarily violate it myself?

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2 (continued)

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

I had no hope whatever of being a professional man. Not only had I been so conditioned that I did not desire it, but the fulfillment of such an ambition was beyond my capabilities. Well-to-do Negroes lived in a world that was almost as alien to me as the world inhabited by whites.

What, then, was there? I held my life in my mind, in my consciousness each day, feeling at times that I would stumble and drop it, spill it forever. My reading had created a vast sense of distance between me and the world in which I lived and tried to make a living, and that sense of distance was increasing each day. My days and nights were one long, quiet, continuously contained dream of terror, tension, and anxiety. I wondered how long I could bear it.

Richard Wright. *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1937, pp. 271-277.

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2 (continued)

After You Have Read

Now that you have finished reading the selection, respond as fully as you can to the following questions and activities. You may refer to the reading selection as often as you like.

1. What is your response to the excerpt from this autobiography? Take a few minutes to write any thoughts, questions, or opinions you may have.

I thought it was sad, yet interesting.
It good to read specially if you like it.
I Say he became very intelegent after
reading all these books

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2 (continued)

2. Choose one of the following quotations from the reading selection to write about. Explain what it might mean in the selection, what it means to you, how you feel about it, or any other comments you may have.

   A. "He was using words as weapons… Could words be weapons?"
   B. "… I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing."

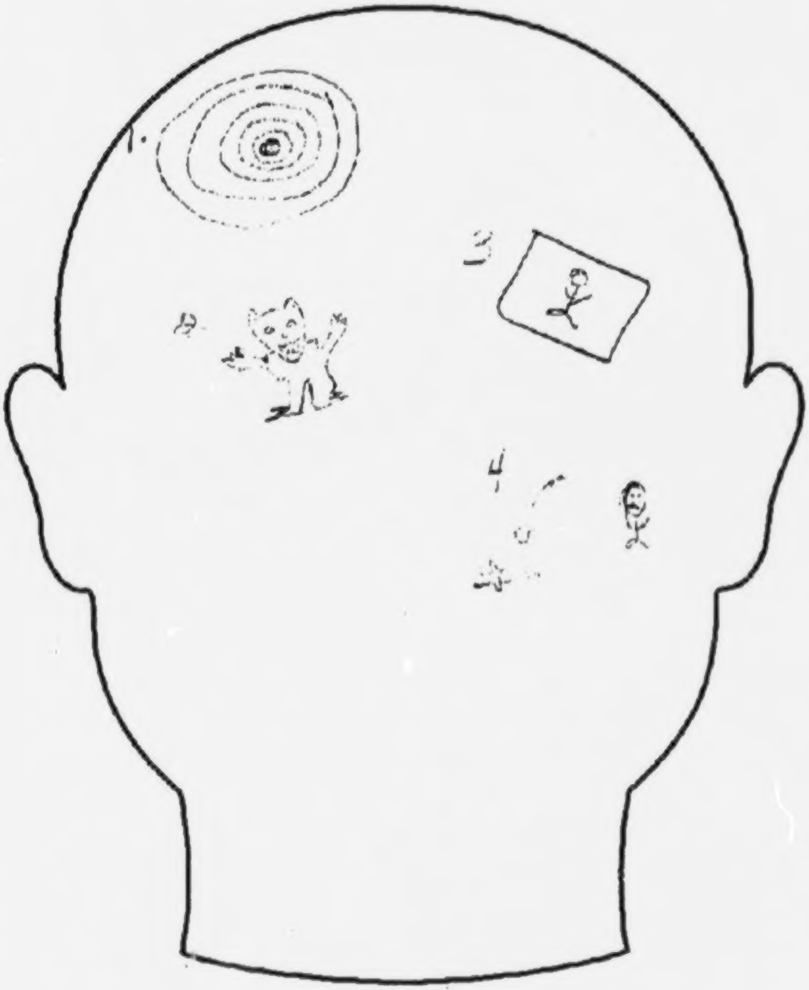
I am writing about the quotation labeled ☑ A ☐ B

Using certain word to hurt people and weapons hurt people.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2 (continued)

3. An "open mind" is an outline of a head that lets you show what a character might be thinking or feeling. In the "open mind" below use symbols, images, drawings, and/or words to show what Richard Wright might have been thinking or feeling in this excerpt from the autobiography.

Open Mind for Richard Wright



Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2 (continued)

4. Explain how the symbols, images, drawings, and/or words you put into your "open mind" represent your ideas about Richard Wright.

1. his mind is expanding-getting big to hold more information

2. the demon- he saw writing the books.

3. trapped - not knowing if he should leave and go north or stay get married or something

4 weapons- words as he described that heart people which frightened him

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2 (continued)

5. What were Richard Wright's reactions to the books he read?

6. At the end of the story, Richard Wright speculates about the kind of future he will choose to have. What do you think he will choose? Why do you think he will make these choices?

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2 (continued)

7. This is your chance to tell anything else you want about your understanding of this autobiographical selection — what it means to you, what it reminds you of, how it relates to your own life, or whatever else you think is important about this reading selection.

STOP!
This is the end of Section One.

Commentary for Score Point 2 Response

In a limited reading performance, readers tend to construct meaning for parts of the text and/or they oversimplify textual meaning. This reader gives evidence of both of these characteristics of score point 2. The only margin notations that appear are two examples of quoting directly from the text: "raging demon" and "weapons." The initial impact of these words fixes the reader's ideas about this text, as we see from his responses to items 3 and 4. The graphic responses and the reader's explanations of the symbols show a firm if reductive grasp of the overall subject of the passage (the spiral stands for "his mind is expanding—getting big to hold more information"). The other symbols—the demon, the image of being trapped, and weapons—show an understanding of selected parts of the text but not of the implications of the whole passage. Without the graphic and the explanations, there would be very little evidence of this reader's partial and limited understanding.

This reader does express a response to the story ("I thought it was sad, yet interesting") and comments that "It good to read specially if you like it." We see a sincere attempt on the part of this reader to convey his sense of the passage to us. Although we might have an idea that this reader understands more than he is able to communicate, we must score the paper on the evidence we have here, which is clearly situated in the description of score point 2.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1

Section One
Reading

Before You Read

You are going to read an excerpt from *Black Boy*, an autobiographical work by African American author Richard Wright. This excerpt takes place in the 1920s, when Wright was 18 years old. He was living in a southern city at a time when Blacks were not allowed to use the public library. In the newspaper he read about a controversial author, H. L. Mencken, and wanted to find out more about him. After considering the various white men he knew from where he worked, Wright approached a man he thought was trustworthy. The man lent Wright a library card, and Wright forged notes requesting books from the library.

Reading Selection

As you read, you may mark up the selection in any way that helps you better understand or remember what you are reading.

Excerpt from
Black Boy
by Richard Wright

That night in my rented room, while letting the hot water run over my can of pork and beans in the sink, I opened *A Book of Prefaces* and began to read. I was jarred and shocked by the style, the clear, clean, sweeping sentences. Why did he write like that? And how did one write like that? I pictured the man as a raging demon, slashing with his pen, consumed with hate, denouncing everything American, extolling everything European or German, laughing at the weaknesses of people, mocking God, authority. What was this? I stood up, trying to realize what reality lay behind the meaning of the words ... Yes, this man was fighting, fighting with words. He was using words as a weapon, using them as one would use a club. Could words be weapons? Well, yes, for here they

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1 (continued)

were. Then, maybe, perhaps, I could use them as a weapon? No. It frightened me. I read on and what amazed me was not what he said, but how on earth anybody had the courage to say it.

Occasionally I glanced up to reassure myself that I was alone in the room. Who were these men about whom Mencken was talking so passionately? Who was Anatole France? Joseph Conrad? Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Dostoevski, George Moore, Gustave Flaubert, Maupassant, Tolstoy, Frank Harris, Mark Twain, Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett, Stephen Crane, Zola, Norris, Gorky, Bergson, Ibsen, Balzac, Bernard Shaw, Dumas, Poe, Thomas Mann, O. Henry, Dreiser, H. G. Wells, Gogol, T. S. Eliot, Gide, Baudelaire, Edgar Lee Masters, Stendhal, Turgenev, Huneker, Nietzsche, and scores of others? Were these men real? Did they exist or had they existed? And how did one pronounce their names?

I ran across many words whose meanings I did not know, and I either looked them up in a dictionary or, before I had a chance to do that, encountered the word in a context that made its meaning clear. But what strange world was this? I concluded the book with the conviction that I had somehow overlooked something terribly important in life. I had once tried to write, had once reveled in feeling, had let my crude imagination roam, but the impulse to dream had been slowly beaten out of me by experience. Now it surged up again and I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing. It was not a matter of believing or disbelieving what I read, but of feeling something new, of being affected by something that made the look of the world different.

As dawn broke I ate my pork and beans, feeling dopey, sleepy. I went to work, but the mood of the book would not die; it lingered, coloring everything I saw, heard, did. I now felt that I knew what the white men were feeling. Merely because I had read a book that had spoken of how they lived and thought, I identified myself with that book.

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1 (continued)

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

I felt vaguely guilty. Would I, filled with bookish notions, act in a manner that would make the whites dislike me?

I forged more notes and my trips to the library became frequent. Reading grew into a passion. My first serious novel was Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*. It made me see my boss, Mr. Gerald, and identify him as an American type. I would smile when I saw him lugging his gold bags into the office. I had always felt a vast distance separating me from the boss, and now I felt closer to him, though still distant. I felt now that I knew him, that I could feel the very limits of his narrow life. And this had happened because I had read a novel about a mythical man called George F. Babbitt.

The plots and stories in the novels did not interest me so much as the point of view revealed. I gave myself over to each novel without reserve, without trying to criticize it; it was enough for me to see and feel something different. And for me, everything was something different. Reading was like a drug, a dope. The novels created moods in which I lived for days. But I could not conquer my sense of guilt, my feeling that the white men around me knew that I was changing, that I had begun to regard them differently.

Whenever I brought a book to the job, I wrapped it in newspaper — a habit that was to persist for years in other cities and under other circumstances. But some of the white men pried into my packages when I was absent and they questioned me.

"Boy, what are you reading those books for?"

"Oh, I don't know, sir."

"That's deep stuff you're reading, boy."

"I'm just killing time, sir."

"You'll addle your brains if you don't watch out."

I read Dreiser's *Jennie Gerhardt* and *Sister Carrie* and they revived in me a vivid sense of my mother's suffering; I was overwhelmed. I grew silent, wondering about the life around me. It would have been impossible for me to

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1 (continued)

have told anyone what I derived from these novels, for it was nothing less than a sense of life itself. All my life had shaped me for the realism, the naturalism of the modern novel, and I could not read enough of them.

Steeped in new moods and ideas, I bought a ream of paper and tried to write; but nothing would come, or what did come was flat beyond telling. I discovered that more than desire and feeling were necessary to write and I dropped the idea. Yet I still wondered how it was possible to know people sufficiently to write about them? Could I ever learn about life and people? To me, with my vast ignorance, my Jim Crow station in life, it seemed a task impossible of achievement. I now knew what being a Negro meant. I could endure the hunger. I had learned to live with hate. But to feel that there were feelings denied me, that the very breath of life itself was beyond my reach, that more than anything else hurt, wounded me. I had a new hunger.

In buoying me up, reading also cast me down, made me see what was possible, what I had missed. My tension returned, new, terrible, bitter, surging, almost too great to be contained. I no longer *felt* that the world about me was hostile, killing; I *knew* it. A million times I asked myself what I could do to save myself, and there were no answers. I seemed forever condemned, ringed by walls.

I did not discuss my reading with Mr. Falk, who had lent me his library card; it would have meant talking about myself and that would have been too painful. I smiled each day, fighting desperately to maintain my old behavior, to keep my disposition seemingly sunny. But some of the white men discerned that I had begun to brood.

"Wake up there, boy!" Mr. Olin said one day.

"Sir!" I answered for the lack of a better word.

"You act like you've stolen something," he said.

I laughed in the way I knew he expected me to laugh, but I resolved to be more conscious of myself, to watch my every act, to guard and hide the new knowledge that was dawning within me.

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading *

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1 (continued)

If I went north, would it be possible for me to build a new life then? But how could a man build a life upon vague, unformed yearnings? I wanted to write and I did not even know the English language. I bought English grammars and found them dull. I felt that I was getting a better sense of the language from novels than from grammars. I read hard, discarding a writer as soon as I felt that I had grasped his point of view. At night the printed page stood before my eyes in sleep.

Mrs. Moss, my landlady, asked me one Sunday morning:

"Son, what is this you keep on reading?"

"Oh, nothing. Just novels."

"What you get out of 'em?"

"I'm just killing time," I said.

"I hope you know your own mind," she said in a tone which implied that she doubted if I had a mind.

I knew of no Negroes who read the books I liked and I wondered if any Negroes ever thought of them. I knew that there were Negro doctors, lawyers, newspapermen, but I never saw any of them. When I read a Negro newspaper I never caught the faintest echo of my preoccupation in its pages. I felt trapped and occasionally, for a few days, I would stop reading. But a vague hunger would come over me for books, books that opened up new avenues of feeling and seeing, and again I would forge another note to the white librarian. Again I would read and wonder as only the naive and unlettered can read and wonder, feeling that I carried a secret, criminal burden about with me each day.

That winter my mother and brother came and we set up housekeeping, buying furniture on the installment plan, being cheated and yet knowing no way to avoid it. I began to eat warm food and to my surprise found that regular meals enabled me to read faster. I may have lived through many illnesses and survived them, never suspecting that I was ill. My brother obtained a job and we began to save toward the trip north, plotting our time, setting tentative

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1 (continued)

dates for departure. I told none of the white men on the job that I was planning to go north; I knew that the moment they felt I was thinking of the North they would change toward me. It would have made them feel that I did not like the life I was living, and because my life was completely conditioned by what they said or did, it would have been tantamount to challenging them.

I could calculate my chances for life in the South as a Negro fairly clearly now.

I could fight the southern whites by organizing with other Negroes, as my grandfather had done. But I knew that I could never win that way; there were many whites and there were but few blacks. They were strong and we were weak. Outright black rebellion could never win. If I fought openly I would die and I did not want to die. News of lynchings were frequent.

I could submit and live the life of a genial slave, but that was impossible. All of my life had shaped me to live by my own feelings and thought. I could make up to Bess and marry her and inherit the house. But that, too, would be the life of a slave; if I did that, I would crush to death something within me, and I would hate myself as much as I knew the whites already hated those who had submitted. Neither could I ever willingly present myself to be kicked, as Shorty had done. I would rather have died than do that.

I could drain off my restlessness by fighting with Shorty and Harrison. I had seen many Negroes solve the problem of being black by transferring their hatred of themselves to others with a black skin and fighting them. I would have to be cold to do that, and I was not cold and I could never be.

I could, of course, forget what I had read, thrust the whites out of my mind, forget them; and find release from anxiety and longing in sex and alcohol. But the memory of how my father had conducted himself made that course repugnant. If I did not want others to violate my life, how could I voluntarily violate it myself?

My thoughts, feelings
and/or questions about
what I'm reading*

---

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1 (continued)

I had no hope whatever of being a professional man. Not only had I been so conditioned that I did not desire it, but the fulfillment of such an ambition was beyond my capabilities. Well-to-do Negroes lived in a world that was almost as alien to me as the world inhabited by whites.

What, then, was there? I held my life in my mind, in my consciousness each day, feeling at times that I would stumble and drop it, spill it forever. My reading had created a vast sense of distance between me and the world in which I lived and tried to make a living, and that sense of distance was increasing each day. My days and nights were one long, quiet, continuously contained dream of terror, tension, and anxiety. I wondered how long I could bear it.

My thoughts, feelings and/or questions about what I'm reading*

Richard Wright. *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1937, pp. 271-277.

*In the test for 1994, this wording has been changed to: *My thoughts and/or questions about what I'm reading.*

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1 (continued)

After You Have Read

Now that you have finished reading the selection, respond as fully as you can to the following questions and activities. You may refer to the reading selection as often as you like.

1. What is your response to the excerpt from this autobiography? Take a few minutes to write any thoughts, questions, or opinions you may have.

i thought the was
really weird. and
the way the said
sometimes they
sounded different. i
really couldn't understand
it

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1 (continued)

2. Choose one of the following quotations from the reading selection to write about. Explain what it might mean in the selection, what it means to you, how you feel about it, or any other comments you may have.

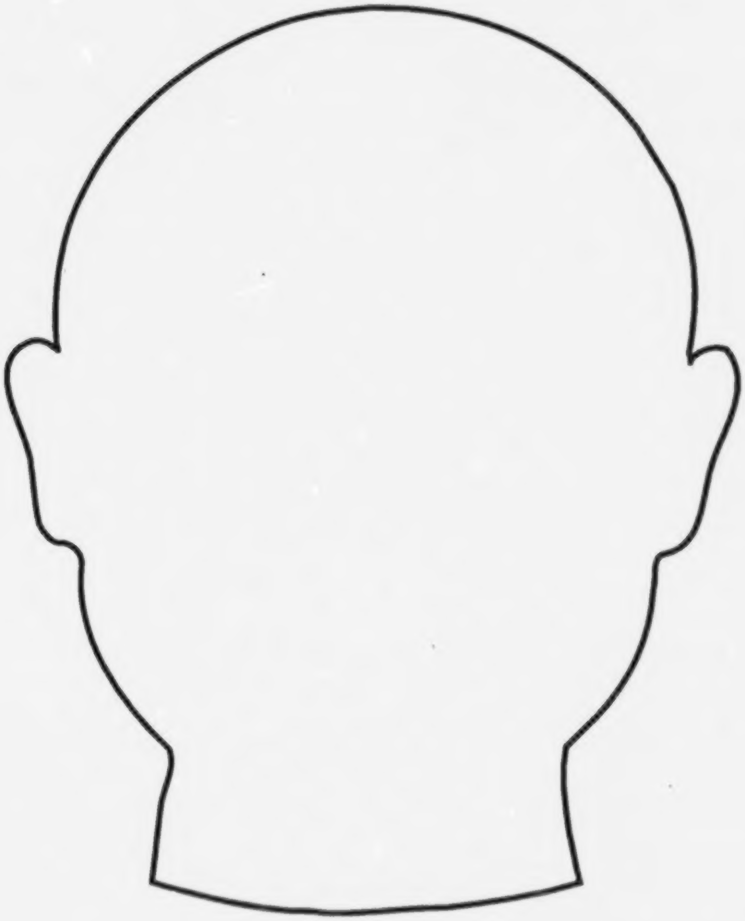
   A. "He was using words as weapons… Could words be weapons?"
   B. "… I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing."

   I am writing about the quotation labeled ☐ A ☐ B

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1 (continued)

3. An "open mind" is an outline of a head that lets you show what a character might be thinking or feeling. In the "open mind" below use symbols, images, drawings, and/or words to show what Richard Wright might have been thinking or feeling in this excerpt from the autobiography.

Open Mind for Richard Wright



Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1 (continued)

4. Explain how the symbols, images, drawings, and/or words you put into your "open mind" represent your ideas about Richard Wright.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1 (continued)

5. What were Richard Wright's reactions to the books he read?

6. At the end of the story, Richard Wright speculates about the kind of future he will choose to have. What do you think he will choose? Why do you think he will make these choices?

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1 (continued)

7. This is your chance to tell anything else you want about your understanding of this autobiographical selection — what it means to you, what it reminds you of, how it relates to your own life, or whatever else you think is important about this reading selection.

STOP!
This is the end of Section One.

Commentary for Score Point 1 Response

In this minimal reading performance, the reader appears to understand very little about the reading selection. This reader's difficulty in even a rudimentary understanding is evident in the only statement in this reading performance: "I thought he was really weird and the way he said sometimes they sounded different. I really couldn't understand it." This reader has made a minimal connection with the male figure in the story "he," but gives no additional information to suggest even a partial reductive understanding of this text.

III. High School Writing Assessment

The essays in this section of the sampler were written by California tenth graders in the spring of 1993 and scored by California classroom teachers in summer of 1993. The essays illustrate the scoring standards of the California Learning Assessment System's writing assessment.

A set of six essays, representing score points 6 through 1, is included for each type of writing assessed: Autobiographical Incident, Intrepretation, Reflective Essay, Speculation About Causes and Effects. All essays are reproduced as the students wrote them, without changing spelling or punctuation. Commentary is provided for each essay.

The essays were chosen to represent the rhetorical effectiveness scoring standard for each type of writing. The rhetorical effectiveness score reflects writers' understanding of the familiar, but unique, writing situations identified by the types of writing listed above. Each of these writing situations requires of students a special way of thinking and composing. They must solve unique problems; consider their readers' knowledge, expectations, and attitudes; and use information, memories, or arguments in particular ways. The rhetorical effectiveness scoring guides, available in the *Writing Assessment Handbook: High School,* identify comprehensively the rhetorical requirement—and teaching issues—for each type of writing that CLAS assesses.

A single essay at a score point can illustrate only one of many ways to reach that level of achievement. For example, many different kinds of essays can be awarded a score of 6—essays with quite different rhetorical strategies, tones, points of view, patterns, beginnings, and endings. Teachers can readily supplement the single essay illustrating each score point with other essays written by students at your school.

Autobiographical Incident

Writers tell a story from their personal experience. They orient readers to the incident and tell a story that may include dialogue, movement or gestures, names of people or objects, and sensory details. Writers describe their remembered feelings, understandings, or reflections at the time of the incident. They may also evaluate the incident from their present perspective, implying or stating its significance in their lives.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6

When I was five my family lived in a suburb of Virginia Beach, Virginia. So, naturally when it was time for me to attend kindergarten, I was bused to a public elementary school in the area. My elementy school was Court House Elementary. Court House sat in the rural area of Virginia Beach. It was very old and local farmers no longer provided enough children to fill the school's desks. This is where I come in. Dependent children from Little Creek Naval Station were bused to Court House to enable the school to fill their enrollment and continue to educate the rural children.

I remember my first day of kindergarten distinctly. After the airy sound of the bus door opening I jumped down its steps and walked up to the enormous door of my new home for educational purposes. To my suprise I was quickly grabbed by the shoulder and herded away from the ominous upper graders. I was reprimanded for having been so careless as to put myself in the midst of the upper graders. It seemed to me, I was succeeding in blowing my first day of school and scolded myself as the same round woman who grabbed me led me and about six other prospective

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 (continued)

kindergarteners to the library of the old school. As I was smelling the aroma of old musty children's books two women came into the library, each with a neat line of small children behind them. The tall, skinny blonde, Barbie doll-looking lady told all of us that we were the new kindergartners and to have a seat. After Barbie had some trouble clarifying exactly what "Indian style" meant a large, soft looking woman with skin the color of melted chocolate Nestle chips introduced herself. "I'm Mrs. Jennings and this is Mrs. ...."– Barbie is all I remember her as. We, the poor Indian style-sitters were next instructed to follow a teacher of our choosing for our tour of the school. I followed Barbie.

The tour was of little significance, except for the cafeteria, which I told my Mom about in great detail after running home off the bus and charging our door. The cafeteria was huge and had real-homemade Southern cooking. The mashed potatoes, fried chicken, and grits were served and cooked by local women,

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 (continued)

both black and white who had amazing smiles and funny hair-nets. I was later informed that the reason our school had such great food, real china, and steel utensils was that many of Court House's students were so poor that lunch would sometimes be the only meal they had. And, in fact food was a (primary) primary motivator for the rural kids to attend school. Besides my detailed account of the cafeteria, my teacher-Mother was disapointed I had retained little else from my first day of education. What did I care? After all, Bodie had a year to teach what I'd need to know for first grade.

The next day, I repeated my motion of jumping of the bus, but avoided the upper grades and went to the "Kindergarten Quad" pointed out to me in the tour. I met up with some newly-made friends when Mrs. Jennings and Ms. Bodie came out, and read names of kids in their respective classes. I was in Mrs. Jenning's class. This suprised me because when I had followed Bodie I assumed I would be in her class. Never the less, I followed Mrs. Jennings and grew to love her and had a wonderful Kindergarten

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 (continued)

experience

I tell you all this for extensive background. For when I look back on my first days of school something strikes me. I had followed the familiar, white woman when asked to pick a teacher, not the old chocolate-colored lady. Was I being racist? Was I making a judgement purely based on the color of someone's skin? Or was I a frightened little girl seeking the familiar? What makes this incident memorable to me is that in subsequent years I've come to the realization that every child who naturally gravitated towards the tall white woman was placed in Mrs. Jenning's class. Were the two teachers trying to nip the young, ugly buds of racism? I don't know. But I do know that the class switch was no coinsedence.

We as humans fear the unfamiliar. I feared chocolate-skinned Mrs. Jennings and the boy in "Father and I" feared the unfamiliar forests. We must learn to overcome of fear and see the delight in what we don't see coming. I love Mrs. Jennings and to this day think she was the best teacher I ever had. You never know what you'll find in a dark forest if your afraid to go in. This is why the world needs people like Mrs. Jennings and "Father" to lead us in to the unfamiliar so we can find the treasures that lie hidden inside it. I've learned to seek the unfamiliar and follow people like Mrs. Jennings and "Father."

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Commentary for Score Point 6 Response

An autobiographical incident has two basic requirements: the narration of a significant event in the life of the writer and the communication of this significance to the reader. This autobiographical piece shows careful attention to detail as the student recreates her first day of kindergarten. What saves it from being a simple narration of events, however, is the insight the writer shows in her clear explanation of why she chose to detail the incident so extensively: she sees in this experience the roots of her understanding of how "we, as humans, fear the unfamiliar" and how she is now able to see the value of following the unknown path.

The incident itself gives an exceptional account of the writer's first day of school, providing concrete and sensual details as well as expressions of remembered feelings. Dialogue, introspection, naming, and specific details contribute to the reader's sense of reliving the experience with the writer. The naming of the teacher "Barbie," the listing of the "real homemade Southern cooking," and the "clarifying exactly what Indian style meant," also provide the reader with a real sense of the incident.

The writer's attitude toward the incident is clear. The reflection "... in subsequent years, I've come to the realization that every child who naturally gravitated towards the tall white woman was placed in Mrs. Hennings's class" shows an ability to re-evaluate childhood experiences with maturity and insight.

This first draft effort is not free of errors, but the writer manages both ideas and language with control and considerable skill. It represents high achievement for a tenth grade student to write in a limited amount of time.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5

"GEEZE, it's hot today" I said to my friend Shawn "Thanks for inviting me to go swiming with you and your family."

"No problem" he replied. "I love taking my friend's to Turrtle Lake, it's great for swiming and fishing.

"You want to swim to the other side"

"Shure"

Shawn and I waded into the lake. The water felt great, like a cool silky sheild protecting me from the sun. My shoulders slipped below the surface and I instantly felt refreshed. I started to kick and was soon crusing across the surface at a leasurly speed, taking the time to roll over on my back and relax here and there.

Shawn was starting to fall behind so I stopped to tread water and wait for him. I noticed we were pretty far out and the water was

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 (continued)

pretty deep. All of a sudden I herd Shawn calling for help. I looked over and noticed that for some reason he couldn't stay afloat. I thought to mysef "Oh God, he's drowning." I immedatly started swiming twords him. I had about ten yards to go when I realized "I didn't know what to do. I'd never been trained in rescuing drowning swimmers before. The one thing I did know was not to swim to them because they grab on to you so you can't swim either" — which is exactly what he did once I got there. He had a grip like he was trying to give me a giant "bear hug," and proceeded to drag me under also. I paniced, my reflexes took over, and I broke his hold. His head immedatly went under. I felt so helpless, Here we were out in the middle of this lake, no ones around except

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 (continued)

for the people on shore (who were too far away to here us call for help).

I had no choice, I was Shawn's only hope; against every instict in my body, I reached out and grabbed him again. This time I was carefull, and made shure I grabed under his shoulder, so he couldn't grab me.

Amazingly I managed to drag him all the way back to shore. Don't ask me how, because I don't remember. All I do remember, is the great feeling I got once it was all over. I was very proud of myself, for I had acted under pressure, and saved a friend's life. Oh, what a feeling!

Commentary for Score Point 5 Response

This writer uses a variety of strategies – dialogue, interior monologue, and specific details – to relate a dramatic, well-told incident. The context is solid and appropriately treated as the writer sets up the swimming incident with his friend Shawn. There is a good balance between establishing the context, presenting the incident, and conveying its personal significance – the primary considerations for evaluating autobiographical incident. The sophistication of the writer's use of narrative techniques helps the reader experience the writer's dilemma as he shares his thoughts and fears of the moment.

The impact of this incident on the writer is clear and the narrative frame well handled. In addition, the writer uses language effectively, as illustrated by his natural use of simile in the sentence: "The water felt great, like a cool silky sheild (sic) protecting me from the sun." It is important to note that the writer shows fine control of the narrative form, even though he does not have control of spelling, which is evaluated separately as one of the conventions. Overall, this is a sound score point 5 paper, certainly a commendable achievement for a tenth grader working within a specified time frame.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4

My personal achievment Came To in baseball We were playing in the championship game for our Leggue We had our best pitcher pitching and he wasn't doing to well. It was the last inning of the game and he had walked the bases loaded with one out. He had a bad temper and was mad at himself that's why he wasn't doing good. All of our other pitchers couldn't pitch that game except for me. I was a rookie that year but did pretty good. Our pitcher had a full count on the batter but if he walked him the game would be tied, so he took himself out of the game. I had to come in relief for him. I remember I wasn't that nervous and everything was Queit. The umpire Told me that There was one out bases were loaded and I had a full count on the batter. If I walked him the game would be tied. I threw the pitch and he hit the ball right back at me and threw it home for one out. Now there were two outs and the bases were loaded. The next batter up was one the team's best hitters. Earlier in the year he hit a home-run off me so he was cocky when he got up there. The first two pitches I threw were strikes but he hit them about 300ft foul. So I

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4

had no balls and two strikes, so I wasted a pitch so he wouldn't know what was coming next. I had experimented with my curve ball in the backyard with my dad before and pretty confident I could throw it for a strike. So I let it rip and the batter had no idea it was coming. He swung and missed by about a foot. Then I heard all the voices again in the crowd cheering, and the next thing I know I was on the ground getting dog piled by my teamates. I was so happy. I had won the game for us I would temporalily be a hero for my team.

Commentary for Score Point 4 Response

This paper is typical of a score point 4 autobiographical sketch: the writer provides enough context for the reader to have a clear orientation; the story itself is quite detailed; and the significance of the incident is implicit.

The organization of this paper is a straightforward, chronological narration of the events of the championship baseball game. Within that framework, the writer uses the repetitive, nonreflective style of "and then ... and then." The writer is fluent in telling the story that every young athlete at least dreams about. It is both predictable and conventional in its telling, with a sustained control of simple sentence structures.

While this paper represents adequate achievement, it could benefit from the kind of peer group editing that would allow the writer to see ways of elevating the telling of the story beyond the predictable and of exploring the significance this event had for the writer.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3

This shows how even playful peer pressure coued end up in tragedy. This is why you shoued think for yourself and make decisions to protect yourself.

There are good types of peer pressure like mentioned before like urging someone to study or have an opperation. This type of peer pressure helps to encourage people.

Commentary for Score Point 3 Response

Score point 3 autobiographical incidents show evidence of some achievement, but indicate that the writer may need opportunities to work with others in expanding the skills of story-telling. This score point 3 paper shows real promise: there are a number of examples that show that the writer is aware of the need for specific details —"a rock face about 15 feet high," and "the blue green water." Such attempts, however, are few, and the paper as a whole seems fragmentary. The incident itself is complete, if sketchy, but it is framed by generalizations about both good and bad kinds of peer pressure. The writer suggests that there are good types of peer pressure but the "playful peer pressure" of the writer's friends urging him to jump is a questionable example of positive peer pressure.

This writer has a clear sense of telling a story; he does, however, need further experience with elaboration and with integrating narration into the larger context of reasons for telling a story.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2

I remember one time when my cousin and I went down to the beach and there was a lot of traffic. We were looking for parking but all of the lots were packed. then towards the pier. I spotted a parking, so I rushed on over and got ready to parralel park when a guy in a motorcycle hurried in the parking as I pulled up to get ready to park. The anger feeling that I had inside was so strong that I could of probably killed him, but I stopped and thought of what would of happened if I did express my anger. I would of probably ended up in jail. So that is what I think helped me change my Ideas during my adolescence.

Commentary for Score Point 2 Response

One word that characterizes this paper is *sketchy*. The paper is an abbreviated account of a time when the writer controlled his anger. The incident is clearly, if briefly, told; but the lack of context and of any exploration of the significance of the incident (appearing here as simply a restatement of the language of the prompt) keeps this paper in the score point 2 category, showing only limited evidence of achievement in writing autobiographical incident.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1

AN INCIDENT THAT SHOWED ME AN IMPORTANT POINT IN MY life WAS HOW people AlwAyS THINK you ARE OUT TO Do BETTER THEN THEM. SO THEY PUT AN INVISIBLE CEILING OVER your goAl IN life. I WAS knowlegdable THIS IMPORTANT point IN life TRYING TO GET A JOB THAT I CAN ACTUALLY RECIEVE MONEY from AFTER TAKES, GAS MONEY, And food.

ITS physically IMPOSIBLE to BREAK Through THIS INVISIBLE CIELING THY PUT ON Kids. UNLESS YOU KNOW SOMEBODY OR HAVE A RELATIVE WORKING for THIS BUSINESS And IS IN A High ENOUGH position To hire you.

I THINK This IS UNfair To YOUNG ADULTS AND Should BE EASIER To GET A High paying JOB.

Commentary for Score Point 1 Response

Although this essay is a poignant response to the prompt, no incident is mentioned. The paper vaguely refers to a job search without identifying a specific incident. The significance of the search is clear in the statement that it is "physically imposible to break through this Invisible cieling thy put on kids." This student needs practice in moving from generalizations to specific incidents: clearly, there is an incident hiding behind this lament. The student's ability to handle sentences and his diction shows the promise that, with direction and practice, he will be able to learn how to tell the story that this essay only hints at.

Interpretation

Writers assert meanings they find in texts (or other data) and argue for the plausibility of their meanings. They may describe texts they interpret, but only to the extent that their readers require it. Writers assert meanings by making claims about texts. They then provide evidence from the texts to support their meanings. Since convincing interpretations require a focused, authoritative interpretive stance, writers must analyze their texts insightfully and comprehensively.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6

Silence: A quiet well of emotions where no water drips, but where we can drown in the solitude. Life is filled with its periods of silence when a person feels peaceful, but as demonstrated in Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, silence also can choke a person, allowing him to be scared away from the world, while it attempts to provide sanctuary for him. Kingston fled to hide in this sanctuary throughout the passage from *The Woman Warrior*, but she only choked on this well of emotions until she overcame it herself.

Kingston's silence represents many things, emotional and social, that plague mankind, and yet her silence carries on a crusade that only she understands. Her silence (a less brave form of the few attempts she made to speak) is her own constant warfare against embarrassment and fear, even though it is a *direct result* of fear, and she carries her silence like a shield against the possible embarrassments of speech. Her insecurity in talking causes her to believe she has an impediment, which is why she stumbles vocally (or thinks she does) and she allows this fear to overcome her and force her into the silence "that becomes misery". The several incidents with her teachers in American school shows clearly how her fear of embarrassment forces her to slowly

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 (continued)

become silent and shrink away from the world. These incidents in American school (as well her trouble with postman etc. mentioned at the beginning of the excerpt), all result from a root of insecurity, however, given by her mother with the "tongue-cutting" incident. The silence represents the emotion planted by all of these incidents combined: fear of embarrassment, insecurity, self-consciousness (a virtual well of emotions). It is no wonder that a young girl such as Kingston can be scared into a solitude with a cruel world fighting against her.

Much of the silence may come from the inner emotions that whirl about within Kingston, but some of it also results directly from the social attitudes embracing the world she feared so much. Kingston drops a reference to the time period of her tale, the mid 1940's ("the Japanese kids... released from concentration camp..."), when racism began to climb to a peak of its own cruelty.* Her many references to the silence of being a Chinese girl show how she is not the only child that finds sanctuary and pain in silence, and these Chinese girls seem to hide in silence to escape the threats of society and racism. (the incidents with the Hawaiian teacher are perfect examples of why the girls chose to hide). Although each girl carries her own personal reason for the majority of her

*as a result of World War II

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 (continued)

silence. They all carry together the burden of living through cruel times. I have many friends of Asian background who seem to carry this burden (although I must admit one or two of my friends are quite garrulous), even though we supposedly live in "less racist times", and they find the sanctuary in this silence away from the world. At the heart of the silence that Kingston guarded herself with there is personal emotion, but that outer "candy-coating" of social discrimination only helped to increase the fear that drove Kingston and countless others into the silence they suffered through.

Kingston's silence, although as a child she may have never realized it, was not just a time of quiet, but a sanctuary and self-defense mechanism against her own insecurities. Her own fears drove her to silence, but the silence itself was like living in fear: fear of embarrassment, fear of sounding foolish, fear of standing out in a crowd with a voice. Kingston's inability to speak when attempted was almost courageous, as she tried to break (unsuccessfully) from the mold her self-inflicted silence, although she mostly succumbed to the simplicity of fear. Kingston was just another soul lost in a well of emotions, with nowhere to go and nothing to do except stay in her sanctuary and crusade against the fears and insecurities of her own world.

Commentary for Score Point 6 Response

Writing an interpretation about a text, whether it is a work of literature or a scientific essay, is an important kind of writing for both academic and workplace success. It requires writers not only to state what a story or article means, but to support their interpretive claims with evidence from the text under consideration. Writers must convey to readers the logic and validity of their interpretations. The best interpretations will accomplish these tasks with style, organization, and precise use of language.

It is apparent from this exemplary paper's first sentence, an eloquent statement about silence, that this is to be an exceptional essay. The writer immediately moves from an extended metaphor comparing silence to "a quiet well of emotions where no water drips" to an exploration of the meaning of the text; she weaves her comments about silence into a perceptive, insightful interpretation of a passage from Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*. This writer's unusually discerning claims are clearly supported by quotation and paraphrase.

Word choice and sentence structure are used not just with precision and control but with grace — "Her own fears drove her to silence, but the silence itself was like living in fear: fear of embarrassment, fear of sounding foolish, fear of standing out in a crowd with a voice." The writer begins with the concept of silence as a well and sustains that idea throughout the essay, concluding that Kingston has "nothing to do except stay in her sanctuary and crusade against the fears and insecurities of *her* own world."

This essay, which deserves careful reading to appreciate its intricate analytic thinking, is clearly representative of score point 6; it demonstrates the highest level of achievement for a tenth grader in writing this demanding kind of essay.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5

Silence usually occurs because of an inability to talk, or because of a fear of talking. This silence can remain throughout a person's lifetime, or just in one incident in a person's life. In Maxine Hong Kingston's autobiography The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts, Kingston's silence occurs all throughout her childhood. Kingston immigrates from China, along with her parents and brothers and sisters, to America. Her childhood in America is depressing and sad because of her lack of communication. Kingston's silence is a result of immigrating and being exposed to a new environment. She no longer has only one race in her society. Kingston is surrounded by people from many countries. There are many nationalities, including Japanese, Afro-American, and American, which she can choose to associate with. But because of this sudden change, and the need to learn a new language, Kingston's plagued with an inability to talk because of fear. And this fear ultimately causes her to live a silent childhood.

Maxine Hong Kingston's description of her American School is very depressing. The reader feels pity for Kingston because of her inability to speak. It is hard for her to learn a new language, English, and speak in front of the class. She is Afraid that her accent in English would cause the children in her class to laugh. Kingston is very embarrassed about this feeling, but cannot over come it. This period of silence on Kingston's life shows the reader the influence of other people. Kingston would be able to speak alone in the classroom if the children did not laugh at her. This is

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 (continued)

true when, at the end of the excerpt, Kingston is able to speak out in her Chinese class. "When it (i)s (her) turn, the same voice (comes) out… I was loud, though. I was glad I didn't whisper." (pg 6) Kingston talks in front of the Chinese class without fear. She is able to do this because she had friends among her. They are all of the same nationality, and they can understand her words. Kingston can not do the same in the American School because of her fear. She is afraid that the children would laugh at her because of her accent. And because she is Chinese, she knows, being a minority, that people treat her worse than if she is of the majority. She feels prejudice, even though it is not bluntly stated. And because of this feeling, of prejudice, it causes fear, and finally leading to an inability to speak.

The silence the Maxine Hong Kingston experiences is uncomfortable to her. She really wants to speak out and tell the people in her American School how she feels, but she doesn't know how. She doesn't know the English language. As a result, this silence means a period of isolation for Kingston. Her paintings with black paint show her life is closed from others. The layers of black over houses and flowers show that something is trying to come out. A bright light is trying to shine through, but a black curtain is blocking it. This black curtain is her fear. Kingston's fear cannot be freed. She is trapped, but wants to be free. She wants to free her emotions, and let others know about her times of happiness, and her times of sadness. However, this silence keeps her from many activities in her life which lead to joy and happiness. This silence means to Maxine Hong

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 (continued)

Kingston a period of Isolation which, if she can break from, would create a whole new world for her.

There have been times in which every person has been isolated. This is usually because of a fear of someone else. I have sometimes become afraid of others because they might laugh at me. This feeling is common to everyone. Everyone feels fear and are afraid of being laughed. Kingston's autobiography *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*, remind us of fear and the ability to talk. Kingston brings her example out into the open because many people are afraid to reveal embarrassing events in their life. And from this excerpt, people are reminded that all cultures are to be respected and not discriminated against.

Commentary for Score Point 5 Response

Like the preceding paper, this score point 5 interpretation is clearly focused on the silence that dominates Maxine Hong Kingston's memories of her early childhood. The writer begins with a global statement about silence, then moves in to address how silence operates in Kingston's childhood. She does spend some time in paraphrasing the passage she read, but does so with the specific purpose of setting the context for her interpretive claims. "She no longer has only one race," she writes, setting up her immigrant status and introducing the idea of fear as the ultimate cause of her living in "a silent childhood."

This writer is comfortable with introducing her own response to the text as she creates her interpretation, but she maintains a distanced tone until the last paragraph, where she introduces her empathy: "I have sometimes become afraid of others because they might laugh at me." She immediately generalizes again, bringing the conclusion of her essay full circle, but with the additional force of her interpretive claims and their supporting comments to give weight to her final reflections on this text.

Characteristic of a score point 5 paper, this essay shows confidence but not the sense of conclusiveness that would rule out other interpretations. It is important to remember that readers may have equally valid but different interpretations of a text; the evaluator must determine whether the evidence that the writer uses to support an interpretation is convincing. In this case, the interpretive claims are focused and supported by quotations and paraphrases from the text as well as by references to personal experience. A notable aspect of this paper for the evaluators who were unable to see it in the sequence of the integrated assessment is that the writer clearly made use of the graphic illustrations she drew in the reading section of the assessment as support for her claims about Kingston's childhood fears.

This paper represents commendable achievement. In order to see the distinctions between score points 6 and 5, it would be useful to reread the score point 6 essay and note the level of complexity of ideas, the evidence of sustained metaphorical thinking, and the high level organization and coherence of that paper.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4

"To an Athlete Dying Young" and "Ex-Basketball Player" are poems with many similarities. Their similarities range from the athletic part of the poems to the personal section of the poems.

The poems both are about two men who are competitive in a sport. The sports are different, but the competition is the same intensity level for both men. Both men, Flick and the un-named athlete, share their devotion towards the sports they are competing in. Nothing was as important as winning their game or race. The sports the men were involved in were a huge portion of their lives and something that they would charish always.

With the help of the competitions, the men had moments of glory. Winning the game and being recongnized as the best at the event was part of the glory they

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 (continued)

shared. Making new records and hoping they would never be beat were glorious times in their lifes. After years of recognition, the men were soon forgotten. The athlete's record was broken and Flick gave up basketball altogether. Both of them wore their honor out. They had their time of glory and it was now time to let someone else experience the feeling.

Neither of the men competeted in their sport for themselves. Flick played basketball for his school and the athlete ran for his town. Both men wanted to bring honor to the environment that they spent most of their time in.

Although both men received special recognition they never were really able to use the sport to help them achieve greatly in their adulthood life. The athlete was still

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 (continued)

running when he died and Flick didn't really make much out of his life except an employee at a gas station.

The men shared many exeperiences in life and neither one of them have anything they could show for it. Their athletic abilities didn't do much for either of them.

The similarities of the poems were very different in many ways, but they were almost identical with what the meaning had for each poem.

Commentary for Score Point 4 Response

At score point 4, we find that many writers show a strong sense of the requirements of interpretive writing but, perhaps because of the complex nature of the texts they are working with, do not provide adequate support for their interpretive statements. These students often make claims that more sophisticated readers would find insupportable. On the positive side, however, these students, who are often at a transitional point in their proficiency in using text to support their ideas, show an understanding of the basic requirements of interpretive essays.

This representative score point 4 essay begins unsteadily, saying that "To an Athlete Dying Young" and "Ex Basketball Player" have similarities that range from the "athlete part" to the "personal section." The writer claims predictably that the men had "moments of glory" and that neither man "competed in their sport for themselves." The writer relies on generalization and summary. Neither quotations nor paraphrases are offered in the way that the writer of a score point 5 or 6 essay might do; thus, the writer of this essay does not amass nearly enough relevant evidence to make a convincing case for this interpretation.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3

This is a story about a young boy and his father. In the beginning of the story the little boys father takes him by the hand and tells him, if he wants to take a walk with him. That makes the boy fell wanted and loved by his father. So they leave and the boy was very happy because he knows that his dad will protect him from anything and he knows that his father is always there for him when he needs help. The boys father was also happy because he also knows that the boy loves him alot and that he looks up to him. But towards the end of the story when they are going back home it was getting dark and the boy was afraid of the dark. So he tells his dad that the dark is horrible but his dad tells him that is not;

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 (continued)

but the little boy doesn't believe him so he feels that his dad not really worry about his feelings of the dark. So the little boy felt sad because what his dad told him didn't help him alot and he was still very afraid. This means that no one can help with your feelings and that only you can control your own feelings!!

Commentary for Score Point 3 Response

This writer begins with a perfunctory "This is a story about a young boy and his father." The boy "feels that his dad is not really worry about his feelings of the dark" and "felt sad because what his dad told him didn't help him alot." Though the writer presents the idea that "no one can help with your feelings," he offers no evidence from the story to support it. Much of the essay is summary in simple sentences rather than concrete evidence. This writer is not yet able to write a balanced, convincing interpretation even though there is some evidence of achievement in his understanding of the story. The next step is for this writer to focus on learning how to support his claims with evidence from the story.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2

Some simularities in the poems Ex-Basketball player and To an athlete dying young. Are that both poems use metaphors. Some examples of a metaphor in an athlete dying young are "after earth has stopped the ears," and "It withers quicker than a rose". An example of a metaphor in Ex basketball player are "his hands were like wild birds" and "The old bubble head type". Both poems have a rythm to it, an example is "and find it unwithered on its curls. The garland briefer than a girls"! Another simularitie is that both poems deal with athletes, one was a runner, and the other was a retired basketball player.

Commentary for Score Point 2 Response

In this score point 2 paper, the writer jumps into a response to the prompt by noting that "Some similarities in the poems … are that both poems use metaphors." The writer proceeds to give good examples of metaphors, demonstrating that his understanding is beyond the literal level; however, pointing out the metaphors never turns to an explanation of what these metaphors mean in the poems or how they are alike or different in themselves. The other claims—both poems "have a rhythm to it" and "both poems deal with athletics" are too broad and general to contribute to an interpretation.

This is a writer who has a sense of what an interpretation should be and who struggles to make one, but whose struggle is incomplete. The paper shows some understanding of literary devices but demonstrates little evidence of achievement in constructing an interpretive essay. This student would benefit from discussing stories with a small group; his comprehension of terms such as *metaphor* needs to be placed into the context of constructing a meaning or interpretation.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1

"Father and I"

This story is about a boy and his father taking a family out on the land. The boy and his father I guess doesn't get along it says that when the boy was ten he remember when his father took by the hand on Sunday afternoon as they were going out in the woods and listening to the birds singing. As they were waving good-bye to Mother, who had to stay home and get the evening meal, all they did was go and discover the real nature in the woods. In the woods where the father and the son went they had discovered some of the nature life around th— They said that there was noise and movoment everywhere; bumblebees come out of there holes, midges swarmed wherever it was marshy, and birds darted out of the bushes to watch them and back again quickly.

They saw a train that came rushing along and they had to go down

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1 (continued)

onto the embankment. The father hailed the engine driver with two fingers to his Sunday hat and the driver saluted and extended his hand. It all happened quickly; then on they went, taking big strides so as to travel on the sleepers and not in the gravel, which was heavy going and rough on the shoes. The sleepers sweated tar in the heat, everything smelled, grease and meadow-sweet, tar and heather by turns. The rails glinted in the sun. On either side of the line were telegraph poles, which sang as you passed them. Yes, it was a lovely day. The sky was quite clear, not a cloud to be seen, and there couldn't be any, either, on a day like this from what father said.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Commentary for Score Point 1 Response

This essay remains on a literal level throughout. The story is summarized at some length, with some sentences being partially copied from the story, but the writer is frequently confused about relationships between sentences and ideas: "As they were waving good-bye to Mother, who had to stay home and get the evening meal, all they did was go and discover the real nature of the woods." The writer shows a minimal level of achievement; he has a sense of the story but does not seem to understand what is required in interpretive writing situations. By working with other students who have a better understanding of what interpretation means, this writer would probably learn quickly how to express his ideas about the meaning of a story or other texts.

Reflective Essay

Writers explore connections between ideas and experiences in order to achieve new insights about the ideas. Writers ground their explanations in concrete personal experiences—ordinary things seen, heard, or read. They then probe these experiences and reflect on ideas suggested by the experiences. They seek to discover implications for themselves and, more importantly, for people in general.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6

Last week, I performed at an orchestra festival in Montebello. The city was about an hour away from the city in which I live, Irvine (known to me as the "epitome of suburbian living"). Once we entered the city, I was stunned. It was nothing at all like Irvine. There was a telltale smoggy haze in the air, instantly ~~notifying~~ alerting me to the fact that we were in a heavily ~~highly~~ industrialized city. And sure enough, on either side of the bus we drove in, there loomed tall factories of various kinds. As for my uncosmopolitan self, I instinctively took the smog and the poverty around me (there were people standing on the side of the street looking for work) as a sign that this was a "bad part of town". Finally, I was struck by the ultimate of ironies. ~~the street~~ As ~~we~~ the bus entered the city I was

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 (continued)

accosted by a sign proudly proclaiming, "Montebello: An All-American Town".

On the ride home from the festival, I sat in a seat by myself on the bus and began to ponder my experience in the city. I silently began chiding myself, How could I use the values that I held by living in a largely resedential city, and judge another city by them? Did I, a pampered member of a middle-class, white-collar family, even have a right to make a "snap judgement" on a city with which I was accustomed? Inwardly, I was ashamed. The fact that I could make such rash judgements and feel that a city was most definitely "Un-American from a brief glance made me feel that I knew less and less about the world as a whole.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 (continued)

As soon as I ceased banging my head against the seat in front of me for my bigoted view of the city, I began to ~~wonder what caused me~~ ~~to~~ wonder what factors ~~[illegible]~~ conditioned me to make such judgements. As I thought about it, I realized that the main factor ~~[illegible]~~ must have been Irvine. I guess Irvine had molded me into what I was ~~am~~. After all, my "instinctive" relation between smog and the people in a city could not have been a ~~[illegible]~~ concept I was born with. I clearly must have been ~~[illegible]~~ measuring the city of Montebello up to my own standards, as dictated by Irvine. Irvine taught me that cities must all be "masterplanned". They all had neatly compacted ~~[illegible]~~ residential areas with cutesy names ("Turtle Rock" for instance). Each ~~[illegible]~~ residential subdivision had ~~must have~~ its own

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 (continued)

grocery store and its own pizza parlor. And above all, it had no smog. In short, Irvine spoiled me. It made me intolerant and forced me to believe that a city could only look a certain way. Irvine made me narrow-minded.

As I began to feel worse about my character and the judgement I pronounced on Montebello, I slowly began to realize that although Irvine molded me in one way, the contrast between Irvine & Montebello molded me in another. By witnessing the contrast, I began to see that there are merits to visiting a place one wouldn't originally want to visit. My visit to the "grungy" city and the contrast I saw made me realize that there are other acceptable ways of living other than my own. ~~After all, my visit to Montebello~~

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 (continued)

My visit to Montebello was broadening. I began to realize that maybe one should take a trip to a much-maligned place such as such as South-Central Los Angeles, if it does infact make one aware of the diversity in our world. I began to feel that one's surroundings do influence one's character, then in order to have a mire socially aware character, one must visit many places.

Leaving the microcosm of the city of Irvine taught me that visiting places one ordinarily wouldn't travel to can enrich one's own character.

Commentary for Score Point 6 Response

The writing of a successful reflective essay requires the ability to see connections. Moving from a personal experience or a general concept, the writer must explore possibilities, try out ideas, and reach beyond superficial understanding to explore what we as human beings have in common. The exemplary reflective essay is marked by a style that effectively conveys the writer's thoughtful considerations.

This exemplary essay moves from a specific occasion in the writer's life—performing at an orchestra festival in a neighboring city—to a probing, insightful exploration of ideas generated by his first awareness of the effects of environment on people's values and character. After establishing a sense of immediacy with the opening statement, "Last week, I performed at an orchestra festival in Montebello," the writer conveys his initial impressions of this city, which, although only an hour away from his own, he sees as a study of contrasting images characterized by smog, heavy industry, and poverty. He then explores the relationship between environment and the development of personal values with a fervor and intellectual acuity that reflects a high quality of reflective thinking. This writer continually grounds his ideas in the experience that occasioned the reflection.

A sense of irony unusual in a tenth grade writer gives rise to a powerful reflection first on his own provincialism and then on the ways that all people are shaped by their environments. It is his ability to see the universal in the personal that elevates this reflection into the exceptional range.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5

THROUGH FIRST HAND EXPERIENCE, I KNOW THAT THE PLACE IN WHICH ONE LIVES INFLUENCES THE INDIVIDUAL'S WHOLE LIFE. I HAVE LIVED, THROUGHOUT MY LIFE, BOTH HERE, IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AND IN POLAND. I HAVE NO DOUBT THAT MY PERSONALITY CHANGED AFTER I MOVED HERE.

I THINK THAT THE GREATEST INFLUENCE UPON A PERSONS CHARACTER ARE THE PERSONALITIES OF THE PEOPLE AROUND HIM, OR HER. NOT SO MUCH TEMPERAMENTS, BUT ATTITUDES TOWARD LIFE VARY BOTH HERE AND IN POLAND. THESE ATTITUDES ARE IN TURN GREATLY INFLUENCED BY THE SOCIOECONOMIC SITUATION OF EACH COUNTRY. THE PERSONALITIES OF PEOPLE ARE DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE COUNTRY'S CIRCUMSTANCES.

IN POLAND, THE AVERAGE PERSON ON THE STREET WILL NOT SMILE OR SAY "HI" TO A STRANGER. PEOPLE DON'T OVERFLOW WITH WARMTH AS THEY DO HERE. ALTHOUGH THE POLITICAL SITUATION IS CHANGING, THEY ARE STILL VERY FATIGUED BY THE YEARS OF COMMUNISM, WHICH CAUSED THEM TO WORK STRENUOUSLY FOR ALMOST NO BENEFITS. SINCE COMMUNISM PROMISED THE SAME BENEFITS FOR EVERY BODY, PEOPLE'S COMPETITION WAS ELIMINATED, AND SO WAS THE DRIVE TO DO A BETTER JOB. EVERYONE LEARNED TO PERFORM HIS OR HER TASK HASTEFULLY AND CARELESSLY, BECAUSE THEY DIDN'T SEE HOW CARE COULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE. SHOPKEEPERS AND ABOUT EVERYBODY ELSE DEVELOPED AN INFERIORITY COMPLEX. THE PEOPLE

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 (continued)

SAW THEMSELVES AS THE "SLAVES" OF THEIR CUSTUMERS, AND THEREFORE FELT INFERIOR, DEVELOPING A DEFENSIVE ATTITUDE WHICH INSTANTLY HAD BAD INFLUENCE UPON THE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CUSTUMER. BASICALLY, THE PEOPLE WERE, AND STILL ARE TIRED, FRUSTRATED AND IMPATIENT. AND WITHOUT THE USELESS SQUABBLES, LIFE COULD BE SO MUCH EASIER TO LIVE.

I KEPT ALL OF THIS IN MIND WHEN I VISITED POLAND LATELY, BUT I STILL FELT I RETAINED AN ATTITUDE I HAD AS A SMALL CHILD IN POLAND. I LIKE TO ARGUE WITH ANYONE WHO I THINK IS WRONG, ESPECIALLY ADULTS. MY PARENTS TAUGHT ME THAT THE GOVERMENTAL AUTHORITY HAS SOME TOTALLY ABSURD IDEAS, AND FROM A YOUNG AGE I PRACTICED DEFYING AUTHORITY, LIKE TEACHERS, CUSTODIANS AND NURSES. THE IRRITATED ATTITUDES OF THOSE POOR TIRED PEOPLE, I TOOK FOR TYRANY, AND I MADE THEM EVEN MORE IRRITATED. YET, SINCE I WAS A SMALL CHILD, THOSE BEHAVIORS WERE TOLERATED.

AFTER ARRIVING IN CALIFORNIA A COUPLE OF YEARS AGO, I MUST HAVE UNDERSTOOD DEMOCRACY SUBCONCIOUSLY. INSTANTLY, I SIMPLY FOUND NO ADULTS TO ARGUE WITH. I FELT THAT HERE, RULES ARE TO BE OBEYED, NOT FOR THE FEAR OF PUNISHMENT, BUT FOR COMMON WELFARE. I WAS AWARE THAT ALL REGULATIONS HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY APPROVED BY THE PUBLIC AND ARE THEREFORE REASONABLE. I WAS NOT A REBEL WITHOUT A CAUSE, SO THAT I HAD NO USE DISOBEYING THEM. I ALSO FELT THAT TEACHERS, CUSTODIANS AND NURSES WERE

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 (continued)

ENJOYING THEIR JOBS AND I THOUGHT THAT THEY WERE SORT OF PUBLICALLY ELECTED I NEED NOT ARGUE WITH THEM. DEMOCRACY [illegible] TO HAVE CAUSED A MONOTONOUS AND COMFORTABLE LIFE HERE.

TRAITS INHERENT TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE THEIR FRIENDLINESS AND POSITIVE ATTITUDE. THEY'VE BEEN RAISED IN A SYSTEM WHICH FACILITATES THESE QUALITIES. BUT THEY ALSO CAN BE TRACED BACK TO THE ATTITUDES OF THEIR ANCESTORS, WHO AS PIONEERS TRAVELLED THROUGH THE HARSH LAND, AND TO ENDURE THE STRENUOUS CONDITIONS, THEY HAD TO HAVE A POSITIVE OUTLOOK ON LIFE. AS FOR ME, I WAS STILL A CHILD WHEN I LIVED IN POLAND, SO I DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO GET "TIRED". HERE, I DEVELOPED A POSITIVE ATTITUDE, WHICH WILL NOT STAND OUT IN MY NATIVE COUNTRY, AS SOON AS THE ATTITUDES OF THE PEOPLE THERE WILL START TO SHIFT, RELYING ON THE SOCIOECONOMIC CHANGES TAKING PLACE NOW.

Commentary for Score Point 5 Response

Although reflective essays derive from the personal experience of the writer, they require probing into what this experience shows not only about the writer's life, but about the larger social implications of an idea. This essay, like the score point 6, derives from the writer's experience; unlike the 6, however, it depends on a comparison of generalities rather than specifics.

The reflection in this essay is extended as the writer contrasts the effects of living in both Poland and the United States on his developing personality and character. While there is extensive reflection and generalizing about the two cultures, there is scant exploration of the overarching idea—the effect of environment on personality or character. Such reflection may be inferred, but it remains limited to these two cultures rather than extended to human beings in general.

Overall, this is a highly commendable essay. The writer has selected a productive example of the effect of cultures on peronality and has conveyed his ideas through strong and controlled diction. This essay lacks only the general or universal reflection marked by evidence of an insight deepened through the process of exploring an idea.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4

"I have great news! We're moving!"

These six faithful that I have heard eleven times in my sixteen year lifetime still tend to haunt me at times. "We're moving." a term that I have com to know and hate. Explain? Well, alright if you must know. When I was eight years old, my father came home with a bouquet of flowers for my mother, sat us all down at the dinner table, and explained to my sisters and me that he had been trasfered to California Great, you say? Wrong. We were going with him. I was forced to leave my friends my house, my dog. I lost so much someone could have written a country-western song about me. However, when I moved I found new friends, a new dog, a new home,

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 (continued)

and anew life. Why am I complaining you say? Well, that's not the end of the story. There eleven more bouqets, eleven more family meetings, and eleven more chances for a hit song. Someone could have done an album! And gone platinum! So, now, I've ended up here, living in a small beach town with one cat and a few good friends. When will it end? No one knows, but I've gotten used to it.

Every time I've had to move, I've had to give up something. Every town I've lived in, there's always that one good friend that I've lost touch with, or one pet that I've had to leave behind. However, everytime I've come to a new town, I've made new friends, gotten other pets, as well as many other new and exciting things. Throughout

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4

my life, I've lost a lot. Through compromise, though, I've gained just as much back.

Commentary for Score Point 4 Response

This paper exemplifies those essays in which personal reflection, stimulated in this case by the refrain of "We're moving," dominates the reflection. The pattern of this essay promises more than it eventually delivers. Recalling a song's refrain, the writer reminds us, "I lost so much someone could have written a country-western song about me." Later the writer says, "eleven more family meetings, and eleven more chances for a hit song." Throughout this essay the writer reminds us of the things left behind in her various moves. These comments show the writer relying on personal reflections about the repetitive moves in her life.

This is a clearly adequate paper and shows the promise typical of many score point 4 papers. Grounding reflections in the occasion and learning to move to general reflection from the personal would help this writer make the leap from the adequate to the commendable or even exceptional paper. We hope she retains her sense of humor as she learns the arts of elaboration and extension.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3

Sometimes compromises are hard thingsto come to No one wants to be the first to give in. But when someone finally does, the outcome is much better My school schedule is very tight and I don't have room for all the things I want to do. Even the things I am currently involved in conflict. When this happens, I have no choice but to compromise. Sometimes I have to miss an important track practice to go to a forensics tournament, or miss a babysitting job for a choir performance. But I still have to work extra hard at the next track meet to make up for the practice missed, but I still get much self satisfaction at knowing that I pushed myself and compromised for a good thing.

Usually I sacrifice the fun things in life for what is better for myself and my education. In bettering yourself, you must give in and maybe

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 (continued)

have to cancel a trip to the movies because you need to study. But in compromising, you can reward yourself after seeing a test result that you studied for. So all you really did is post poned that movie until after your test.

Compromises are also a good thing between two people that care about each other. So they both give in a little and they both are happy in the end. I compromise with my dad all the time. He gives up a little time to take me shopping, and he ends up with a lunch from me at his favorite fast food establishment.

I wish more people would come to their senses and realize that if they just compromise with each other, they both get their ways, or something better. You don't always have to have your way, but both ways.

Commentary for Score Point 3 Response

The generalized point of this essay is given at the beginning, and what follows are examples to illustrate the writers pre-established meaning rather than an exploration of ideas that is characteristic of reflection. The examples are clearly and competently presented, but they are generic, lacking the freshness of the more specific and detailed occasions found in the higher score points. The conclusion has a moralistic quality rather than an exploratory one, typical of papers at score point 3.

This writer has a reflective attitude toward life and just needs to explore that reflectiveness in writing rather than convey foregone conclusions. By presenting an occasion fully and deepening the reflection stimulated by the occasion, this writer would be well on the way toward a higher score point.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2

How I deal with obstacles when I play baseball for a Team I usally need somthing To work on Most of the Time it is batting because I get real nervous when I get up To bat. The way I deal with that is To Try to take my mind of of what I am doing it works sometime because you dont Try so hard to get a hit.

When you see other people dealing with obstacles sometimes they talk with other peope to se what they can do to improve. Some people will just give up and say they cant do it but what I really think works the best is spend more time with it and Just try your best youwill get to your goal someday as long as you dont give up.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2 (continued)

because some people are just borne
with a natural tallent and
some people have to work
really herd for there goals
and usually if you work real
hard you will succed in
your goals.

The
End

Commentary for Score Point 2 Response

This paper represents a classic example of a writer using extended personal observations on a topic rather than engaging in exploratory reflective thinking. Throughout this essay, the writer makes statements such as "just try your best you will get to your goal someday as long as you don't give up." (sic) This essay has helpful hints, generalized attempts at reflection, and observations substituting for reflection. None of these observations is grounded in an occasion.

Because this writer has made a sincere attempt at reflection, he shows a great deal of potential for improvement. Through working with writing groups and learning stategies to develop reflection from concrete occasions, this student may well show improvement in this type of writing. He definitely knows that if "you work real hard you will succed in your goals." (sic)

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1

I live in a good neighborhood and theirs
not to many crimes comitted in the
neighborhood nor the small area I live in.
I like were thope area I live in
it's pleasant not nearly hoodlums in there
and the neighborhood is clean. Plus the neighborhood
is a young one, every body there has a kid
or more except a few the few are elderlies.
To me I think its one of the best
neighborhoods were a kid could grow up ~~at~~
at.

Commentary for Score Point 1 Response

This paper demonstrates the work of a writer who has not yet mastered the ability to present a concrete occasion or a reflection. It lacks organization and has frequent lapses in sentence sense, resulting in confusion for the reader. As in many score point 1 papers, it presents statements of opinion rather than reflection.

Speculation About Causes and Effects

Writers speculate or conjecture about the possible causes and effects of events (for example, causes for a school team's unexpected loss of a game), trends (effects of a club's or church's steadily dwindling enrollment), or phenomena (causes for cheating on school examinations). Instead of merely reporting established causes or effects that no one questions, successful writers propose likely causes or effects, trying to convince readers of their plausibility. They must anticipate readers' objections and evaluate causes and effects readers may prefer, and they must argue inventively for their own proposed causes and effects. A writer may argue for one or several likely causes and effects.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6

No Points for Second Best

In this world which we live in, such emphasis is put on power and success, that it seems at a glance that our lives are one big compromise. We give up our freedom to work + make more money. We give up our morals to obtain power. We make compromises with ourselves, to justify our actions to our conscience. It seems, in fact, that the factor that most often forces us to make compromises is our ambition.

This ever present ambition is crucial in the development of the title role in Shakespeare's Macbeth. In the play, Macbeth sacrifices his peace of mind, + his sense of self worth, to achieve his goals.

When the play opens, Macbeth is shown to be a good man, honorable and loyal, a noble kinsman to Duncan, the reigning king of Scotland. He is a respectable man of respectable station, and in King Duncan's.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 (continued)

opinion, the best kinsman anyone could hope for. He has but one flaw, hidden deep inside of him: ambition.

What starts as a fantasy grows into an obsession, and Macbeth compromises everything to see it become a reality. Alone, perhaps, he may have been content to daydream, but, as we are driven today by society, he was prodded along by those around him.

Macbeth first compromises his morals, in dealings with the Wierd Sisters, 3 witches whose prophesies inspire him with visions of grandeur. They hail him as Thane of Cawdor + Glamis, while he is only Thane of Glamis, then they had him as king. This comes as quite a shock, since he and his wife have been discussing that very possibility.

Lady Macbeth can be held mainly responsible for convincing Macbeth to do whatever he had to to achieve his goals.

Macbeth makes his biggest sacrifice when he murders Duncan. In that act, he has lost all morals, and most importantly he has a man on his conscience he can never be at peace with.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 6 (continued)

As he is leaving the bedchambers of the dead Duncan, he hears a voice, "Macbeth shall sleep no more! Macbeth hath murdered sleep."

And indeed, he cannot. The hideousness of his crime haunts him at all times, refusing him the finiest bit of sleep. He has achieved his goals, but the compromise he made was a dear one. Macbeth sees his own depravity, and simply stops caring. He becomes completely indifferent to his actions, and at last gives up his sanity as well.

Did he regret it? I say he did. We must all make compromises to achieve our goals. But we must also learn to weigh the consequences of our actions against their rewards. Macbeth was so disgusted with himself that he was unable to enjoy or appreciate the fact that he had, in fact, achieved his goal. To be truly successful, we must make compromises, but we must learn what price is reasonable, and which is to great. When we realize we cannot lose our self respect, we can achieve both the goals we have set for ourselves, and our happiness.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Commentary for Score Point 6 Response

This exceptional example of speculation about causes or effects illustrates the depth and sophistication possible in this writing type at the high school level. The essay shows both an understanding of the literature selected (*Macbeth*) and an ability to respond to all of the hallmarks of exceptional speculative writing. The writer guides the reader through an analysis of the compromises made by Macbeth while also acknowledging the connection of Macbeth's faults to our own. Unlike essays earning lower score points, this essay utilizes the elements of the plot to support and develop assertions made by the writer. Details are selected and logically presented to create a complex analysis of the question raised by the prompt and defined by the writer in the opening paragraph. The writer presents the essay with confidence and assurance, inviting the reader to join in the examination of the reasons for Macbeth's compromises.

The essay opens with an introduction that establishes the writer's authority through a general discussion of the question posed by the prompt. The concept of ambition forcing compromise becomes the transition from the general discussion of the first paragraph to the actual topic of the essay, *Macbeth*. In the subsequent paragraphs, the essay presents the events of the play, constantly returning to the thesis of compromise being forced by ambition. After using the specific details from the play to support the thesis, the essay moves to more universal observations for the final several sentences. Much of the strength of the essay is derived from the careful selection and management of details to support the assertions being made by the writer. The sentence variety and diction make the writing effective and suggest writing that is sophisticated, insightful, and controlled. As is usually the case in score point 6 writing, this essay utilizes a variety of strategies (personal example, movement from general to specific, from specific to universal, careful citation from literature, insightful interpretation) to present a confident and exceptional response to the prompt.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 (continued)

Many children feel uncomfortable speaking in front of people. They may fear that their listeners will laugh or make fun of them. Many children are taught not to speak unless they are spoken to. This causes children not to speak or express themselves. Other children may simply be too shy to speak out. This may be because they aren't comfortable in that particular setting.

The most common reason why children remain silent and are afraid to speak up is because of their insecurities about themselves. They may fear that by making their thoughts and opinions audible, their peers will laugh and make fun of them. Others fear that their thoughts or opinions will not be accepted by their peers, making them stand out Some fear that they will say something wrong and be verbally punished accordingly.

Another popular reason why children are afraid to speak is because they are too shy. Some children become shy, and often embarrassed when someone calls on them to speak. Some are frightened to speak because they fear that they won't speak articulately or with proper diction. This would cause their peers to laugh or poke fun at them causing them extreme embarassment. Other students are shy because they are not accustomed to speaking in front of people. When students are not accustomed to speaking in front of people and are told to they may not know how to behave verbally.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 (continued)

This may cause them to feel very self-conscious about themselves.

Children may not be comfortable talking in a particular setting. A child might be very talkative at home, but mute at school. This difference in behavior is more than likely caused by the difference in settings. A child is most comfortable in their home surroundings because they are used to the people in their surroundings. They may be very comfortable talking to their siblings or parents because of the more personal relationship they share. In school, a child may not be comfortable talking to his/her peers or teachers because he/she does not feel comfortable around them. This shyness, felt by children, may be caused at home. A parent may insult their child. This makes the child feel useless. This also lowers the child's self-esteem, making the child not want to talk in fear of being insulted even more.

There are many solutions to help children overcome their fear of talking. It is importent that the help start at home because that is the source of the problem. If parents would talk to their children more and boost their self-esteem, children would not be ashamed to speak in front of others.

Parents need to teach their children that it is good to be opiniated. It is important that they be taught that it is good and healthy to have their own opinions, even though

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 5 (continued)

they may not have the same opinions as their classmates or peers. They should be taught to have confidence in themselves and proud of their identity.

Teachers can also help their students to overcome their fear of talking. They can do this by encouraging the child to voice his/her opinions and congratulate him/her after doing so. By congratulating the child they are raising that child's self-confidence.

If teachers and parents interact with children and help them improve their speaking skills many children will feel more comfortable speaking in front of others.

Commentary for Score Point 5 Response

This essay shows the thoroughness and insight expected in a commendable response to a prompt asking for speculation about causes and effects. The introduction, which paraphrases the prompt and focuses the essay, helps to orient the reader and provides a context for the response. The essay moves through several reasons why students are reluctant to speak and, unlike essays at lower score points, develops each reason by example and by elaboration, giving the reader a fuller sense of what the writer deems significant in each of these scenarios. While the details are not as insightful or imaginative as those found in a score point 6 response, they help to establish an authoritative stance as the writer explains the issue. This writer examines a number of reasons for student reluctance and characterizes these reasons ("most common," "another popular reason"). One of the most compelling strengths of the essay is in the extension the writer makes in addressing possible solutions to the issues raised. The solutions, while somewhat predictable, show an engagement with the prompt that indicates skill in working with speculative prompts. The writer utilizes natural and effective transitions and enough sentence variety to keep the writing interesting and convincing.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 (continued)

I think people are sometimes shy in different places than others because they may feel uncomfortable talking around people they don't know. I personally am very shy sometimes In my math class I hardly say a word 'cause I don't know anybody. In my English class I constantly talk because I know a whole bunch of people.

I think people are sometimes shy in one setting because they feel like everyone is watching their every movement. Shy people have to learn that not everybody's watching them all the time. People may seem outgoing in another setting if they're comfortable with what they're doing. They may be in a dance class and they may have to dance so they'll be very outgoing.

Teachers may make kids feel uncomfortable in the classroom in many ways. This will cause

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 (continued)

a kid too be quiet. A teacher may embarass a student by showing the whole class his or her paper or tell the whole class how they scored on a test. A teacher may read one of their notes out loud too. A teacher may make a student just feel plain dumb too. Teachers can help a shy kid by asking them questions or asking them to read outloud in class. Other children may cause kids to feel uncomfortable by teasing them or making fun of them in class. When a teacher sees a kid making fun of another they should make a joke of it by picking on the student who's making fun.

Schools can help shy kids by having different activities for kids to go to. They should also offer clubs to kids so they can get involved in other activities. This way the kids can meet new people and

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 4 (continued)

get involved.

Commentary for Score Point 4 Response

This essay demonstrates an adequate expression of "writing that speculates about causes and effects." The essay begins with a pleasant introduction using personal examples to ease the reader into the discussion of why students are sometimes reluctant to talk. The essay moves adequately from one point to another showing a logical, but predictable approach to the prompt. The paper contains several assertions about student behavior and about how teachers affect student behavior. These assertions are supported by brief elaborations, but the essay never really fully explores or develops any of the ideas raised. The essay shows an awareness of the requirements of speculative writing, but never moves beyond the adequate to fully realize the potential possible. The paper provides information but little analysis.

This paper shows a friendly, personal, and sometimes even earnest tone in a genuine attempt to respond to the prompt. We see a writer who is on the right track in speculative writing and who will benefit from additional practice in this writing type. The connection between literature and written response as described in the Model Curriculum Standards provides many possibilities for writers to develop more complete and elaborated responses as they speculate about why characters from literature act as they do.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3

Essay

In the story "Roselily" their is lots of compromise Like she is ganing a husdband but losing her freedom. Another example is she is gaining her life in the city but she loses all of her friends and her job. It will be hard for her to find a job in the city. Like in 'Romeo and Juliet" Romeo gains her love but he thinks she is dead so he loses his life by killing himself. Then Juliet kills herself because of Romeo. Or in "Lord of the Flies" when one person becomes the king and Blows the Conch everyone obeys him. So when they gain a leader they lose their freedom. When Juliet swallowed the fake poison Romeo heard she was dead so he killed his self. So when Juliet recovered and heard that Romeo committed suicide she killed herself. Romeo met Juliet at a costume party and it was love at first sight. So they both loved each other and secretly saw each other. Then Romeo got kicked out of the

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 3 (continued)

City and went to live Somewhere else. When he was gone Juliette went to the Apothecary and got a Fake poison that would stop all her vital signs for a Secret amount of time. But the messenger never got to Romeo to tell him it was a trick. So the other person got their first to tell him that she died so he killed hisself. When Juliette found out she killed herself for real. They were then barried next to each other and they finally got some peace + quiet from then on.

The possible reasons for this Characters actions are that he loved Juliette too much and didn't want to live without her, He thought they would be together in heaven forever, or that he just wanted to die because he got turned down by the prettiest girl he has ever seen. And she killed herself for it instead of Just saying "No". So he could not live with it so he killed hisself.

Commentary for Score Point 3 Response

This essay incorporates many of the requirements of speculative writing. The essay engages the topic, presents several pieces of literature that meet the issues raised in the prompt, and provides some speculation about character motivation. Unfortunately, the essay does not move beyond superficial and undeveloped observations. The essay shows a technique often evidenced in score point 3 responses, the list. The reader is not provided a context for the variety of literature presented, and the essay rambles from one point to another. The summarization of plot overshadows the attempts to speculate about the reasons for compromise. The writer does show an understanding of the need to present a situation and provide some speculation about why characters compromise in the situations presented. Clearly, this writer will benefit from further practice in speculative writing and in the kind of classroom activity that helps writers become more focused.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 2

In one play I read, a main character killed another main character. He decided to do this because he knew he would be the leader of this "conspiracy. Although he was friends with this other character, he did it for popularity. He lost a good friend but gained the popularity and love of a bunch of other people. Some examples would be that throughout the story, he always said that he loved this man but more people would love him if he did this after the action took place he was sad but he gloated in his own popularity.

Commentary for Score Point 2 Response

This essay responds to the prompt by immediately presenting a situation from a play. The response suggests some speculation as the writer presents the examples in the final two sentences. The focus of the essay must be inferred and the presentation of the situation does not assist the reader because of the lack of specificity. The speculation presented does not logically connect to the situation and is brief. The writer of the essay is attempting to respond to the needs of speculative writing by presenting a situation from a play and attempting to speculate about the actions of a character from the play. The essay would benefit from more specificity in reference to the literature and from a clearer focus. Even though the essay is limited in its achievement, it represents a response that is beginning to show elements of speculative writing.

Student Response Illustrating Score Point 1

I think that maybe it would AFFect there Relashinship beAween the Mom & the DAd Becauee they Mite Fiet over the gRil. I Feel sorey FoR the greil Because She Mite NOT talk FoR the Rest of here Life. IF the dad and mom WoRked together Everything could turn out RigHt.

Commentary for Score Point 1 Response

This essay responds to the prompt by referring obliquely to a story. The essay is very brief and superficial consisting of a simple presentation of the situation without ever reaching speculation. The essay shows virtually no development, even in the presentation of the situation. The essay does not show any of the speculation expected from the prompt. The final sentence suggests that the writer could benefit from instruction in the elements of speculative writing and some guidance in responding to the writing instructions in the prompt.

IV. Sample High School Prompt

Directions for Section One: Reading

This is a reading assessment. In this section you will read an article, story, or poem. Some of you may read two selections. Next to the reading selection(s) is a wide margin that you may use to make any notes as you read. You also may mark up the reading selection in any way that helps you to better understand or remember what you are reading. When you are finished reading, answer all the questions about the reading selection(s) in the best way you can.

Find the words GO ON at the bottom of the next page. The words GO ON mean to turn the page and continue working. Keep working until you see the words STOP! DO NOT TURN THE PAGE! This is the end of Section One.

Section One
Reading

Before You Read

You are going to read an excerpt from *Black Boy*, an autobiographical work by African American author Richard Wright. This excerpt takes place in the 1920s, when Wright was 18 years old. He was living in a southern city at a time when Blacks were not allowed to use the public library. In the newspaper he read about a controversial author, H. L. Mencken, and wanted to find out more about him. After considering the various white men he knew from where he worked, Wright approached a man he thought was trustworthy. The man lent Wright a library card, and Wright forged notes requesting books from the library.

Reading Selection

As you read, you may mark up the selection in any way that helps you better understand or remember what you are reading.

Excerpt from
Black Boy
by Richard Wright

My thoughts
and/or questions about
what I'm reading

That night in my rented room, while letting the hot water run over my can of pork and beans in the sink, I opened *A Book of Prefaces* and began to read. I was jarred and shocked by the style, the clear, clean, sweeping sentences. Why did he write like that? And how did one write like that? I pictured the man as a raging demon, slashing with his pen, consumed with hate, denouncing everything American, extolling everything European or German, laughing at the weaknesses of people, mocking God, authority. What was this? I stood up, trying to realize what reality lay behind the meaning of the words ... Yes, this man was fighting, fighting with words. He was using words as a weapon, using them as one would use a club. Could words be weapons? Well, yes, for here they

GO ON

were. Then, maybe, perhaps, I could use them as a weapon? No. It frightened me. I read on and what amazed me was not what he said, but how on earth anybody had the courage to say it.

Occasionally I glanced up to reassure myself that I was alone in the room. Who were these men about whom Mencken was talking so passionately? Who was Anatole France? Joseph Conrad? Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Dostoevski, George Moore, Gustave Flaubert, Maupassant, Tolstoy, Frank Harris, Mark Twain, Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett, Stephen Crane, Zola, Norris, Gorky, Bergson, Ibsen, Balzac, Bernard Shaw, Dumas, Poe, Thomas Mann, O. Henry, Dreiser, H. G. Wells, Gogol, T. S. Eliot, Gide, Baudelaire, Edgar Lee Masters, Stendhal, Turgenev, Huneker, Nietzsche, and scores of others? Were these men real? Did they exist or had they existed? And how did one pronounce their names?

I ran across many words whose meanings I did not know, and I either looked them up in a dictionary or, before I had a chance to do that, encountered the word in a context that made its meaning clear. But what strange world was this? I concluded the book with the conviction that I had somehow overlooked something terribly important in life. I had once tried to write, had once reveled in feeling, had let my crude imagination roam, but the impulse to dream had been slowly beaten out of me by experience. Now it surged up again and I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing. It was not a matter of believing or disbelieving what I read, but of feeling something new, of being affected by something that made the look of the world different.

As dawn broke I ate my pork and beans, feeling dopey, sleepy. I went to work, but the mood of the book would not die; it lingered, coloring everything I saw, heard, did. I now felt that I knew what the white men were feeling. Merely because I had read a book that had spoken of how they lived and thought, I identified myself with that book.

My thoughts
and/or questions about
what I'm reading

GO ON

My thoughts
and/or questions about
what I'm reading

I felt vaguely guilty. Would I, filled with bookish notions, act in a manner that would make the whites dislike me?

I forged more notes and my trips to the library became frequent. Reading grew into a passion. My first serious novel was Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*. It made me see my boss, Mr. Gerald, and identify him as an American type. I would smile when I saw him lugging his gold bags into the office. I had always felt a vast distance separating me from the boss, and now I felt closer to him, though still distant. I felt now that I knew him, that I could feel the very limits of his narrow life. And this had happened because I had read a novel about a mythical man called George F. Babbitt.

The plots and stories in the novels did not interest me so much as the point of view revealed. I gave myself over to each novel without reserve, without trying to criticize it; it was enough for me to see and feel something different. And for me, everything was something different. Reading was like a drug, a dope. The novels created moods in which I lived for days. But I could not conquer my sense of guilt, my feeling that the white men around me knew that I was changing, that I had begun to regard them differently.

Whenever I brought a book to the job, I wrapped it in newspaper — a habit that was to persist for years in other cities and under other circumstances. But some of the white men pried into my packages when I was absent and they questioned me.

"Boy, what are you reading those books for?"

"Oh, I don't know, sir."

"That's deep stuff you're reading, boy."

"I'm just killing time, sir."

"You'll addle your brains if you don't watch out."

I read Dreiser's *Jennie Gerhardt* and *Sister Carrie* and they revived in me a vivid sense of my mother's suffering; I was overwhelmed. I grew silent, wondering about the life around me. It would have been impossible for me to

GO ON

have told anyone what I derived from these novels, for it was nothing less than a sense of life itself. All my life had shaped me for the realism, the naturalism of the modern novel, and I could not read enough of them.

Steeped in new moods and ideas, I bought a ream of paper and tried to write; but nothing would come, or what did come was flat beyond telling. I discovered that more than desire and feeling were necessary to write and I dropped the idea. Yet I still wondered how it was possible to know people sufficiently to write about them? Could I ever learn about life and people? To me, with my vast ignorance, my Jim Crow station in life, it seemed a task impossible of achievement. I now knew what being a Negro meant. I could endure the hunger. I had learned to live with hate. But to feel that there were feelings denied me, that the very breath of life itself was beyond my reach, that more than anything else hurt, wounded me. I had a new hunger.

In buoying me up, reading also cast me down, made me see what was possible, what I had missed. My tension returned, new, terrible, bitter, surging, almost too great to be contained. I no longer *felt* that the world about me was hostile, killing; I *knew* it. A million times I asked myself what I could do to save myself, and there were no answers. I seemed forever condemned, ringed by walls.

I did not discuss my reading with Mr. Falk, who had lent me his library card; it would have meant talking about myself and that would have been too painful. I smiled each day, fighting desperately to maintain my old behavior, to keep my disposition seemingly sunny. But some of the white men discerned that I had begun to brood.

"Wake up there, boy!" Mr. Olin said one day.

"Sir!" I answered for the lack of a better word.

"You act like you've stolen something," he said.

I laughed in the way I knew he expected me to laugh, but I resolved to be more conscious of myself, to watch my every act, to guard and hide the new knowledge that was dawning within me.

My thoughts
and/or questions about
what I'm reading

GO ON

If I went north, would it be possible for me to build a new life then? But how could a man build a life upon vague, unformed yearnings? I wanted to write and I did not even know the English language. I bought English grammars and found them dull. I felt that I was getting a better sense of the language from novels than from grammars. I read hard, discarding a writer as soon as I felt that I had grasped his point of view. At night the printed page stood before my eyes in sleep.

Mrs. Moss, my landlady, asked me one Sunday morning:

"Son, what is this you keep on reading?"

"Oh, nothing. Just novels."

"What you get out of 'em?"

"I'm just killing time," I said.

"I hope you know your own mind," she said in a tone which implied that she doubted if I had a mind.

I knew of no Negroes who read the books I liked and I wondered if any Negroes ever thought of them. I knew that there were Negro doctors, lawyers, newspapermen, but I never saw any of them. When I read a Negro newspaper I never caught the faintest echo of my preoccupation in its pages. I felt trapped and occasionally, for a few days, I would stop reading. But a vague hunger would come over me for books, books that opened up new avenues of feeling and seeing, and again I would forge another note to the white librarian. Again I would read and wonder as only the naive and unlettered can read and wonder, feeling that I carried a secret, criminal burden about with me each day.

That winter my mother and brother came and we set up housekeeping, buying furniture on the installment plan, being cheated and yet knowing no way to avoid it. I began to eat warm food and to my surprise found that regular meals enabled me to read faster. I may have lived through many illnesses and survived them, never suspecting that I was ill. My brother obtained a job and we began to save toward the trip north, plotting our time, setting tentative

My thoughts
and/or questions about
what I'm reading

GO ON

dates for departure. I told none of the white men on the job that I was planning to go north; I knew that the moment they felt I was thinking of the North they would change toward me. It would have made them feel that I did not like the life I was living, and because my life was completely conditioned by what they said or did, it would have been tantamount to challenging them.

I could calculate my chances for life in the South as a Negro fairly clearly now.

I could fight the southern whites by organizing with other Negroes, as my grandfather had done. But I knew that I could never win that way; there were many whites and there were but few blacks. They were strong and we were weak. Outright black rebellion could never win. If I fought openly I would die and I did not want to die. News of lynchings were frequent.

I could submit and live the life of a genial slave, but that was impossible. All of my life had shaped me to live by my own feelings and thought. I could make up to Bess and marry her and inherit the house. But that, too, would be the life of a slave; if I did that, I would crush to death something within me, and I would hate myself as much as I knew the whites already hated those who had submitted. Neither could I ever willingly present myself to be kicked, as Shorty had done. I would rather have died than do that.

I could drain off my restlessness by fighting with Shorty and Harrison. I had seen many Negroes solve the problem of being black by transferring their hatred of themselves to others with a black skin and fighting them. I would have to be cold to do that, and I was not cold and I could never be.

I could, of course, forget what I had read, thrust the whites out of my mind, forget them; and find release from anxiety and longing in sex and alcohol. But the memory of how my father had conducted himself made that course repugnant. If I did not want others to violate my life, how could I voluntarily violate it myself?

My thoughts
and/or questions about
what I'm reading

GO ON

I had no hope whatever of being a professional man. Not only had I been so conditioned that I did not desire it, but the fulfillment of such an ambition was beyond my capabilities. Well-to-do Negroes lived in a world that was almost as alien to me as the world inhabited by whites.

What, then, was there? I held my life in my mind, in my consciousness each day, feeling at times that I would stumble and drop it, spill it forever. My reading had created a vast sense of distance between me and the world in which I lived and tried to make a living, and that sense of distance was increasing each day. My days and nights were one long, quiet, continuously contained dream of terror, tension, and anxiety. I wondered how long I could bear it.

My thoughts
and/or questions about
what I'm reading

Richard Wright. *Black Boy: A Record of Childhood and Youth.* New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1937, pp. 271-277.

GO ON

After You Have Read

Now that you have finished reading the selection, respond as fully as you can to the following questions and activities. You may refer to the reading selection as often as you like.

1. What is your response to the excerpt from this autobiography? Take a few minutes to write any thoughts, questions, or opinions you may have.

GO ON

2. Choose one of the following quotations from the reading selection to write about. Explain what it might mean in the selection, what it means to you, how you feel about it, or any other comments you may have.

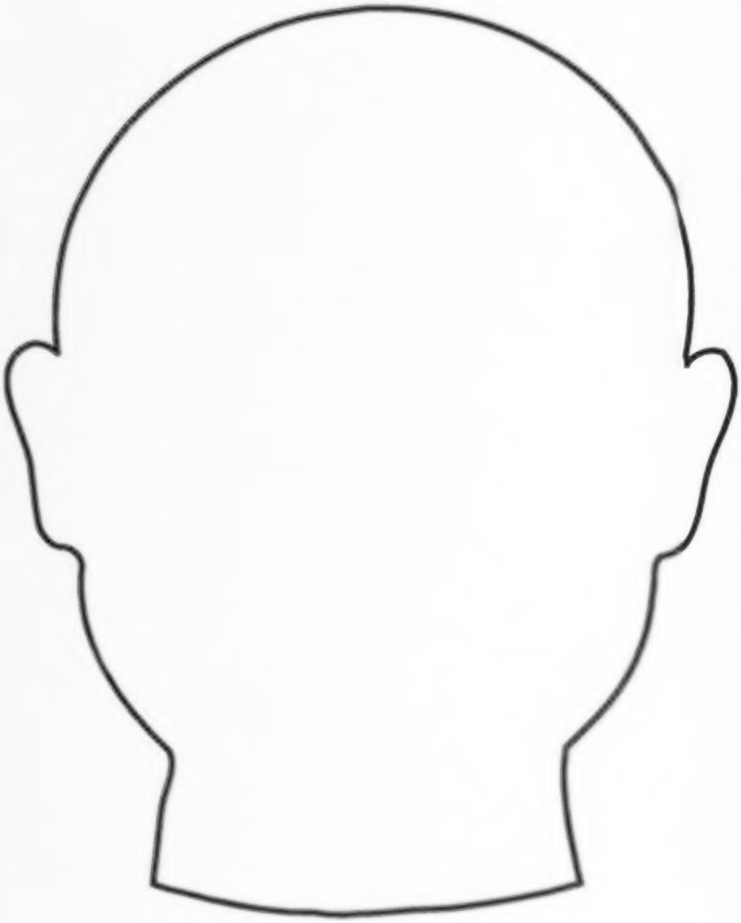
   A. "He was using words as weapons...Could words be weapons?"
   B. "...I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing."

   I am writing about the quotation labeled ☐ A ☐ B

GO ON

3. An "open mind" is an outline of a head that lets you show what a character might be thinking or feeling. In the "open mind" below use symbols, images, drawings, and/or words to show what Richard Wright might have been thinking or feeling in this excerpt from the autobiography.

Open Mind for Richard Wright



GO ON

4. Explain how the symbols, images, drawings, and/or words you put into your "open mind" represent your ideas about Richard Wright.

GO ON

5. What were Richard Wright's reactions to the books he read?

6. At the end of the story, Richard Wright speculates about the kind of future he will choose to have. What do you think he will choose? Why do you think he will make these choices?

7. This is your chance to tell anything else you want about your understanding of this autobiographical selection — what it means to you, what it reminds you of, how it relates to your own life, or whatever else you think is important about this reading selection.

STOP!
This is the end of Section One.

Directions for Section Two: Group Work

In this section you will be working in a group. Your group will be talking about topics related to what you read in Section One. Some of the activities in this section may direct you to work individually and then share with your group, and other activities may have all of you working together. The activities of your group will be different from neighboring groups. It is important to take notes of your discussion because you will be able to look at these notes when you write your essay in the next section of this assessment.

Read the directions in Section Two and do the activities described. Members of the group may take turns reading the directions. The group leader should keep the activities moving along so that you finish all activities.

Section Two
Group Work

Excerpt from
Black Boy
by Richard Wright

That night in my rented room, while letting the hot water run over my can of pork and beans in the sink, I opened *A Book of Prefaces* and began to read. I was jarred and shocked by the style, the clear, clean, sweeping sentences. Why did he write like that? And how did one write like that? I pictured the man as a raging demon, slashing with his pen, consumed with hate, denouncing everything American, extolling everything European or German, laughing at the weaknesses of people, mocking God, authority. What was this? I stood up, trying to realize what reality lay behind the meaning of the words ...
Yes, this man was fighting, fighting with words. He was using words as a weapon, using them as one would use a club. Could words be weapons? Well, yes, for here they were. Then, maybe, perhaps, I could use them as a weapon? No. It frightened me. I read on and what amazed me was not what he said, but how on earth anybody had the courage to say it.

Occasionally I glanced up to reassure myself that I was alone in the room. Who were these men about whom Mencken was talking so passionately? Who was Anatole France? Joseph Conrad? Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, Dostoevski, George Moore, Gustave Flaubert, Maupassant, Tolstoy, Frank Harris, Mark Twain, Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett, Stephen Crane, Zola, Norris, Gorky, Bergson, Ibsen, Balzac, Bernard Shaw, Dumas, Poe, Thomas Mann, O. Henry, Dreiser, H. G. Wells, Gogol, T. S. Eliot, Gide, Baudelaire, Edgar Lee Masters, Stendhal, Turgenev, Huneker, Nietzsche, and scores of others? Were these men real? Did they exist or had they existed? And how did one pronounce their names?

I ran across many words whose meanings I did not know, and I either looked them up in a dictionary or, before I had a chance to do that, encountered the word in a context that made its meaning clear. But what strange world was this? I concluded the book with the conviction that I had somehow overlooked something terribly important in life. I had once tried to write, had once reveled in feeling, had let my crude imagination roam, but the impulse to dream had been slowly beaten out of me by experience. Now it surged up again and I hungered for books, new ways of looking and seeing. It was not a matter of believing or disbelieving what I read, but of feeling something new, of being affected by something that made the look of the world different.

As dawn broke I ate my pork and beans, feeling dopey, sleepy. I went to work, but the mood of the book would not die; it lingered, coloring everything I saw, heard, did. I now felt that I knew what the white men were feeling. Merely because I had read a book that had spoken of how they lived and thought, I identified myself with that book. I felt vaguely guilty. Would I, filled with bookish notions, act in a manner that would make the whites dislike me?

GO ON

I forged more notes and my trips to the library became frequent. Reading grew into a passion. My first serious novel was Sinclair Lewis's *Main Street*. It made me see my boss, Mr. Gerald, and identify him as an American type. I would smile when I saw him lugging his gold bags into the office. I had always felt a vast distance separating me from the boss, and now I felt closer to him, though still distant. I felt now that I knew him, that I could feel the very limits of his narrow life. And this had happened because I had read a novel about a mythical man called George F. Babbitt.

The plots and stories in the novels did not interest me so much as the point of view revealed. I gave myself over to each novel without reserve, without trying to criticize it; it was enough for me to see and feel something different. And for me, everything was something different. Reading was like a drug, a dope. The novels created moods in which I lived for days. But I could not conquer my sense of guilt, my feeling that the white men around me knew that I was changing, that I had begun to regard them differently.

Whenever I brought a book to the job, I wrapped it in newspaper_a habit that was to persist for years in other cities and under other circumstances. But some of the white men pried into my packages when I was absent and they questioned me.

"Boy, what are you reading those books for?"

"Oh, I don't know, sir."

"That's deep stuff you're reading, boy."

"I'm just killing time, sir."

"You'll addle your brains if you don't watch out."

I read Dreiser's *Jennie Gerhardt* and *Sister Carrie* and they revived in me a vivid sense of my mother's suffering; I was overwhelmed. I grew silent, wondering about the life around me. It would have been impossible for me to have told anyone what I derived from these novels, for it was nothing less than a sense of life itself. All my life had shaped me for the realism, the naturalism of the modern novel, and I could not read enough of them.

Steeped in new moods and ideas, I bought a ream of paper and tried to write; but nothing would come, or what did come was flat beyond telling. I discovered that more than desire and feeling were necessary to write and I dropped the idea. Yet I still wondered how it was possible to know people sufficiently to write about them? Could I ever learn about life and people? To me, with my vast ignorance, my Jim Crow station in life, it seemed a task impossible of achievement. I now knew what being a Negro meant. I could endure the hunger. I had learned to live with hate. But to feel that there were feelings denied me, that the very breath of life itself was beyond my reach, that more than anything else hurt, wounded me. I had a new hunger.

In buoying me up, reading also cast me down, made me see what was possible, what I had missed. My tension returned, new, terrible, bitter, surging, almost too great to be contained. I no longer *felt* that the world about me was hostile, killing; I *knew* it. A million times I asked myself what I could do to save myself, and there were no answers. I seemed forever condemned, ringed by walls.

I did not discuss my reading with Mr. Falk, who had lent me his library card; it would have meant talking about myself and that would have been too painful. I smiled each day, fighting desperately to maintain my old behavior, to keep my disposition seemingly sunny. But some of the white men discerned that I had begun to brood.

"Wake up there, boy!" Mr. Olin said one day.

GO ON

"Sir!" I answered for the lack of a better word.

"You act like you've stolen something," he said.

I laughed in the way I knew he expected me to laugh, but I resolved to be more conscious of myself, to watch my every act, to guard and hide the new knowledge that was dawning within me.

If I went north, would it be possible for me to build a new life then? But how could a man build a life upon vague, unformed yearnings? I wanted to write and I did not even know the English language. I bought English grammars and found them dull. I felt that I was getting a better sense of the language from novels than from grammars. I read hard, discarding a writer as soon as I felt that I had grasped his point of view. At night the printed page stood before my eyes in sleep.

Mrs. Moss, my landlady, asked me one Sunday morning:

"Son, what is this you keep on reading?"

"Oh, nothing. Just novels."

"What you get out of 'em?"

"I'm just killing time," I said.

"I hope you know your own mind," she said in a tone which implied that she doubted if I had a mind.

I knew of no Negroes who read the books I liked and Iwondered if any Negroes ever thought of them. I knew that there were Negro doctors, lawyers, newspapermen, but I never saw any of them. When I read a Negro newspaper I never caught the faintest echo of my preoccupation in its pages. I felt trapped and occasionally, for a few days, I would stop reading. But a vague hunger would come over me for books, books that opened up new avenues of feeling and seeing, and again I would forge another note to the white librarian. Again I would read and wonder as only the naive and unlettered can read and wonder, feeling that I carried a secret, criminal burden about with me each day.

That winter my mother and brother came and we set up housekeeping, buying furniture on the installment plan, being cheated and yet knowing no way to avoid it. I began to eat warm food and to my surprise found that regular meals enabled me to read faster. I may have lived through many illnesses and survived them, never suspecting that I was ill. My brother obtained a job and we began to save toward the trip north, plotting our time, setting tentative dates for departure. I told none of the white men on the job that I was planning to go north; I knew that the moment they felt I was thinking of the North they would change toward me. It would have made them feel that I did not like the life I was living, and because my life was completely conditioned by what they said or did, it would have been tantamount to challenging them.

I could calculate my chances for life in the South as a Negro fairly clearly now.

I could fight the southern whites by organizing with other Negroes, as my grandfather had done. But I knew that I could never win that way; there were many whites and there were but few blacks. They were strong and we were weak. Outright black rebellion could never win. If I fought openly I would die and I did not want to die. News of lynchings were frequent.

I could submit and live the life of a genial slave, but that was impossible. All of my life had shaped me to live by my own feelings and thought. I could make up to Bess and marry her and inherit the house. But that, too, would be the life of a slave; if I did that, I would crush to death something within me, and I would hate myself as much as I knew the whites already hated those who had submitted. Neither could I ever willingly present myself to be kicked, as

GO ON

Shorty had done. I would rather have died than do that.

I could drain off my restlessness by fighting with Shorty and Harrison. I had seen many Negroes solve the problem of being black by transferring their hatred of themselves to others with a black skin and fighting them. I would have to be cold to do that, and I was not cold and I could never be.

I could, of course, forget what I had read, thrust the whites out of my mind, forget them; and find release from anxiety and longing in sex and alcohol. But the memory of how my father had conducted himself made that course repugnant. If I did not want others to violate my life, how could I voluntarily violate it myself?

I had no hope whatever of being a professional man. Not only had I been so conditioned that I did not desire it, but the fulfillment of such an ambition was beyond my capabilities. Well-to-do Negroes lived in a world that was almost as alien to me as the world inhabited by whites.

What, then, was there? I held my life in my mind, in my consciousness each day, feeling at times that I would stumble and drop it, spill it forever. My reading had created a vast sense of distance between me and the world in which I lived and tried to make a living, and that sense of distance was increasing each day. My days and nights were one long, quiet, continuously contained dream of terror, tension, and anxiety. I wondered how long I could bear it.

GO ON

1. Draw or sketch one image or idea that you remember from the reading selection. When you are finished, share your image or idea with the rest of your group.

GO ON

2. Richard Wright says,

   "It was not a matter of believing or disbelieving what I read, but of feeling something new, of being affected by something that made the look of the world different."

   In your group, talk about what you think Wright means by this statement. Write down the ideas from each group member below.

3. Recall the thoughts that you had in Section One as you speculated about Richard Wright's future. Share the ideas with your entire group. Use the space below to write down any group ideas that are different from your own.

GO ON

4. Think about two changes that have occurred in your own life. List or draw them in Column One. In Column Two, write what happened as a result of the changes.

Column One	Column Two
Changes in my life	Results

GO ON

5. Now share these changes and their effects on your life with your group. Take notes as the members of your group discuss the changes that occurred in their lives.

GO ON

6. Sometimes major changes in our lives are caused by an encounter with a person. Think of a person who has triggered a change in your life. Discuss this person with your group.

STOP!
This is the end of Section Two.

Directions for Section Three: Writing

This is a test of your writing ability. You will be able to do a better job if you spend a few minutes planning. You may use the notes and ideas you wrote down for Section Two of this test when you worked in your groups.

Each of you may have a different topic to write about. Read your topic carefully, and reread it if necessary so that you understand what you are being asked to do. When you finish writing, read your work carefully and make any changes or additions that will improve it. Fix any mistakes you notice.

Turn the page to your writing assignment. The first part, *Writing Situation*, will help you think about what you are to write. The second part, *Directions for Writing*, tells you exactly what to write.

If you need more paper, raise your hand and your teacher will give you some.

Section Three
Writing

Writing Situation

"Obstacles are what you see when you take your eyes off the goal." An obstacle is something that gets in the way of your achieving a goal. In *Black Boy*, you read about the obstacles in Richard Wright's life.

Your English teacher has asked you to write an essay reflecting on how people respond to obstacles in their lives. Think about specific occasions in your life when you faced obstacles, or when you observed someone else dealing with an obstacle. Think about obstacles faced by characters in books or movies. You may look back at the notes from your group discussion to help you get started.

Directions for Writing

Write an essay reflecting on how people deal with obstacles. You might use your own experience or observations as a specific occasion for reflecting on your ideas. In your essay, explore whatever ideas occur to you about this subject. You do not have to convince your teacher that your ideas are "right," but your comments should be presented in a thoughtful way.

GO ON